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# TIMES MOVIE GUIDE

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# About the Author

Nikhat Kazmi has been a film critic with *The Times of India* since 1987. She has regularly reviewed Hindi films, Hollywood releases in India and regional cinema that feature in the National and International Film Festivals. Her reviews and articles on cinema have mapped trends, movements and milestones in the history of movielore since the last two decades and provide an incisive look into the growth of one of the largest industries of popular culture. More importantly, her weekly review column in *The Times of India* has guided popular cinema viewing, where a three-star rating has almost always meant a must-see for the cinema buff. She has written two books on popular Hindi cinema, *The Dream Merchants* and *Ire in the Soul*. Recently, she authored the *Times Movie Guide* which is the first compendium of contemporary Hindi films, with snazzy reviews and biographies of key players in the entertainment industry.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

# TIMES MOVIE GUIDE

## BEST OF HOLLYWOOD

NIKHAT KAZMI

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**Nikhat Kazmi,**
New Delhi

# Introduction

It began as a small cattle trail that snaked through hills and petered out into a dusty track long before the Californian coastline. Many years ago, before the arc lights had turned on full blast in Los Angeles, Sunset Boulevard had a bridle path running down the centre, since the most sensible mode of transport in Hollywood was the horse. Few roads were paved and some newly established studios even provided hitching rails.

Today, Hollywood is a mega town, a mega industry, a global art form and, more importantly, a state of mind that transcends all barriers, national and geographical. According to a 2002 study by the Motion Pictures Association of America, Hollywood sells almost 1.3 billion tickets every year to rake in a worldwide revenue of $51 billion. An average Hollywood film costs almost $50 million and the industry has been growing at a rate of 5.6 per cent every year. The proportions have been acquiring a gargantuan form with each new year, so much so, that nearly 51 films released last year grossed more than $100 million, while 11 films grossed more than $400 million to become international blockbusters.

However, Hollywood's power does not lie in statistics alone. More than the million dollar figures, it is the all-encompassing influence of the movie industry on the global mindset that speaks of its true supremacy. There is nobody, almost nobody, who has been immune to the charisma of films like *Casablanca*, *The Godfather*, *E.T.* and *Star Wars*. Nor is there anyone out there who has not been lured by the myth of the Superhero. Count the number of times the global imagination has soared with Superman's flights of fancy or hopped aboard the Batmobile with the crusader of the dark nights and you'll realize that Andy Warhol wasn't wrong when he confessed, "I love Hollywood! It's beautiful. It's plastic, but I love plastic. I want to be plastic."

*Times Guide to Hollywood Blockbusters* brings you the magic of this multiverse (read, parallel universe) with all its success stories. Unlike all other guides in the market, this one talks only about hits, not misses; about films that need to be seen and savoured, not about those meant to be dismissed as C-grade tripe. Be rest assured, for the generalist out there, each and every title among the 1,000 films listed in these pages deserves a *dekko*. Simply because this compendium sifts the chaff from the grain, and reviews only films that have towered at the box office or won critical acclaim. For the specialist, there are 15 categories to choose from, making it easier for the diehard action, sci-fi, crime, horror, romance, classic, Oscar film buff to settle down with her staple fare. No desperate flipping, no endless searching, just choose your genre and follow the star rating system to pick your film. With our carefully calibrated rating system that varies from one to five stars, there is no way you can go wrong. While rating our films, we have taken into account the importance of both mass appeal and artistic excellence: the sensibilities of the frontbencher and the fastidious cineaste. So, you could find a Quentin Tarantino film sharing the same rating with a David Lean classic.

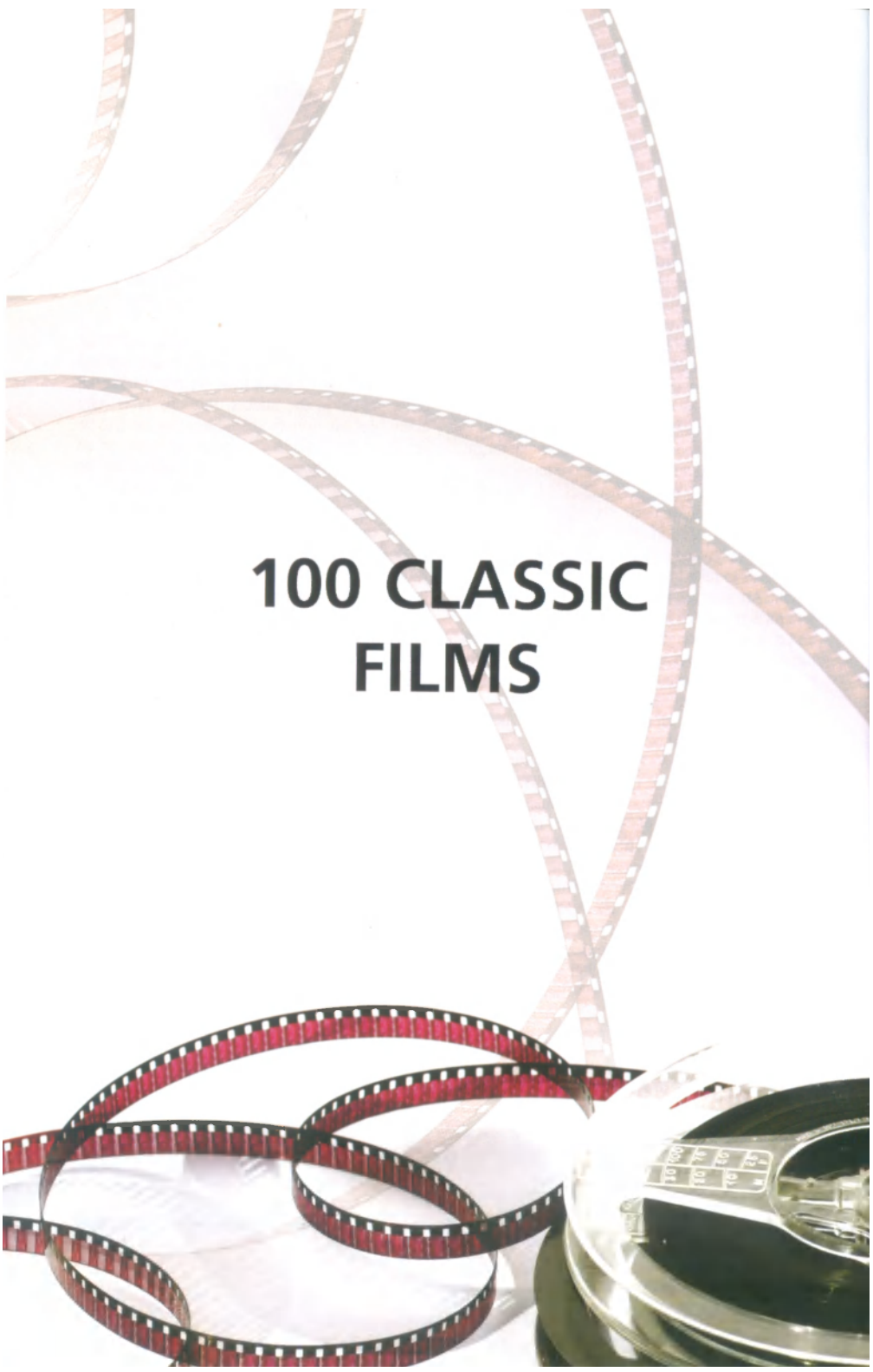
Undoubtedly, we have been very strict with our ratings because we believe our viewers are an extremely literate cinema audience. So, you will find very few films with the perfect score of five stars. Happy reading and happy viewing!

**RATINGS**

★★★★★ **OUTSTANDING**
★★★★ **VERY GOOD**
★★★ **GOOD**
★★ **AVERAGE**
★ **POOR**

N.B. The book includes reviews of films released till July 2008.

# 100 CLASSIC FILMS



## ▶ A CLOCKWORK ORANGE

DRAMA | 1971 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STANLEY KUBRICK
**CAST:**
MALCOLM MCDOWELL, PATRICK MAGEE

Based on a novel by Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* shows young sociopath Alex DeLarge (Malcolm McDowell) going in for rehab after being arrested for crimes that include rape and murder. However, the state-sponsored rehab is experimental and devious and Alex remains a misfit in society. The high point of Stanley Kubrick's film is the unbridled celebration of the anti-hero and the ultra-violence he indulges in, as he goes out looking for fun every night with his bunch of delinquents. Led by Alex, the gang rapes, murders and terrorizes their victims against a background score of Beethoven's symphonies. The state tries to cure the psychopath and straighten out his criminal tendencies so that sex and violence induce acute nausea in him. But questions of liberty and realpolitik reduce him to a mere puppet in the hands of the authoritarian state, while Stanley Kubrick unveils the conundrum: a violent, criminalized state can only have violent criminals as citizens. Disturbing and debatable, the film has a class act by young McDowell.

## ▶ A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

DRAMA | 1951 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ELIA KAZAN
**CAST:**
MARLON BRANDO, VIVIEN LEIGH, KIM HUNTER
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (VIVIEN LEIGH).

A remarkable adaptation of Tennessee Williams' intensely moving play, Elia Kazan's film, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, created some unforgettable crackling screen chemistry between Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh. Having fallen upon bad days, a desperate Blanche DuBois (Vivien Leigh) escapes from her scandalous past and seeks temporary refuge with her sister Stella (Kim Hunter) and her brutish brother-in-law Stanley Kowalski (Marlon Brando). Stanley takes an instant dislike to his sister-in-law's fake upper-crust attitude that comes in direct conflict with his working-class morals and mores. And as the past threatens to creep into the claustrophobic apartment, the veneer of civility too begins to fade, with Stanley's overpowering sexuality getting a bit too troublesome for the ladylike Ms. DuBois. While Brando's sweaty T-shirt look is impossible to forget, it's Vivien Leigh's portrait of a desperate, lonely woman trying to survive in a cruel world, which hits you with its intensity.

## ▶ THE ACCUSED

DRAMA | 1988 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JONATHAN KAPLAN
**CAST:**
JODIE FOSTER, KELLY MCGILLIS
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (JODIE FOSTER).

In the eyes of the world, Sarah Tobias (Jodie Foster) is a low-class bimbette, with flashy ways and a sexuality that she flippantly wears on her sleeve. She ends up being gang-raped on a pinball machine in a seedy bar one late night. Later, she loses her case in court and sees her rapists walk out scot-free since the jury feels she was asking for it. But Sarah fights back for justice with the help of her feisty lawyer (Kelly McGillis) and proves that a woman's dignity is inviolate, irrespective of her image or profession. With a gutsy performance by Jodie Foster, the film is a shot in the arm for women power.

## ▶ ALL ABOUT EVE

DRAMA | 1950 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ
**CAST:**
BETTE DAVIS, ANNE BAXTER
**AWARDS:**
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

Fans can be dangerous and how! Eve Harrington (Anne Baxter), a scheming young fan, is not content with merely meeting her dream star, Margo Channing (Bette Davis). She wants to take over Channing's life too and become the star herself. And the fact that the legendary Broadway actress is ageing and fading only makes things easier for Eve. She first manages to enter the star's life as her helper, then as her understudy and finally as a Broadway biggie herself. *All About Eve* is a compelling woman versus woman duel, with Baxter and Davis lending a dignity to the traditional vamp and heroine roles.

## ▶ ALL THE KING'S MEN

DRAMA | 1949 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT ROSSEN
**CAST:**
BRODERICK CRAWFORD, JOHN IRELAND
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR.

Some films never age due to their topicality. *All The King's Men* remains as fresh as ever even today simply because it unveils the ubiquitous truth: power corrupts, and how! Tracing the rise – and fall – of a populist hero, Willie Stark (Broderick Crawford), who enters politics and becomes governor of Louisiana because he wants to weed out political corruption, the film is a stirring story of good turned evil. It doesn't take long before Stark forgets his principles and grows from social reformer to raving megalomaniac, leapfrogging across the political juggernaut, much to the discomfiture of his loyalist, a disillusioned newspaper reporter, Jack Burden (John Ireland), who becomes a witness to his moral decay.

## ▶ AMADEUS

DRAMA | 1984 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MILOS FORMAN
**CAST:**
TOM HULCE,

Based on Peter Schaffer's scintillating play, *Amadeus* is a fictionalized account of the rivalry between legendary musician Wolfgang Madeus Mozart (Tom Hulce) and Viennese court composer Antonio Salieri (F. Murray Abraham) who could never

F. MURRAY ABRAHAM
**AWARDS:**
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTION, BEST ACTOR (TOM HULCE).

accept the power and popularity of Mozart and supposedly caused his death in 1791. Ironically, Salieri himself acknowledged the greatness of Mozart's prodigious creativity and enjoyed his compositions, but only covertly. His rage was more against God who had been unfair at imparting his largesse. He assiduously plotted to destroy the career of the "creature", that's what he called Mozart. Interestingly, the film also portrays Mozart in a dehumanized, less deified manner, more as an outlandish, offensive brat, than the exalted icon he is usually projected as. With its riveting soundtrack, *Amadeus* is a powerful re-look at the manic genius that was Mozart.

## ▶ AMERICAN BEAUTY

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
SAM MENDES
**CAST:**
KEVIN SPACEY, ANNETTE BENING
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (KEVIN SPACEY).

Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey) is the ordinary guy who has nothing to lose. Boxed in by a claustrophobic marriage that has lost its zing and an uninspiring middle-level job in an advertising magazine, he has been sleepwalking through life. Nothing interests him anymore, not even his adolescent daughter who, like all neglected kids, harbours an intense dislike for her parents. Lester's life perks up suddenly when he sets eyes on his daughter's best friend Angela (Mena Suvari), a sparkling beauty, who fires his fantasies. The birth of a new Burnham ... Refreshingly, Burnham isn't the prototypal middle-aged, over-the-hill junkie who merely lusts for a little Lolita. Instead, he uses his passion to discover new sources of strength and dignity that enable him to say "No" to everything that irks him. This includes his aggressive, irascible, over-ambitious wife (Annette Bening) and his soul-sapping job. It's the birth of a new hero, who is ordinary yet extraordinary, common yet uncommon, anonymous yet impressive.

## ▶ AMERICAN GRAFFITI

DRAMA | 1973 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GEORGE LUCAS
**CAST:**
RICHARD DREYFUSS, RONNY HOWARD, PAUL LE MATT, CHARLES MARTIN SMITH

Largely seen as George Lucas' nostalgic tribute to his growing-up years, *American Graffiti* has survived as a historical documentation of an important era of teen angst and aspiration in the US. Growing up in small-town America in the Eisenhower years (1950s -1960s) was completely different from the angst-ridden acid and rock '70s. Optimism was still the quintessential teen attitude, as displayed by a bunch of high school grads who spend their last night together, before branching out into a competitive world. It's a long, eventful summer night that unfolds against a neon-lit backdrop with the four buddies trying to forge a bond that will survive the tumultuous '70s, '80s and '90s... Here's a teen flick that simply never ages.

## ▶ ANNIE HALL

DRAMA | 1977 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
WOODY ALLEN
CAST:
WOODY ALLEN, DIANE KEATON
AWARDS:
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (DIANE KEATON) AND BEST DIRECTOR.

*Annie Hall* is billed as a "nervous romance". Now, that's a perfect description for a Woody Allen film that showcases the oddities of romance between two oddballs. Allen's Alvy Singer is a high-strung, neurotic New York intellectual who earns his living as a stand-up comedian. Life's an overwritten roster of questions for this quintessential '70s New Yorker, specially when he's trying to find out why his romance with the wild, wannabe-crooner, Annie Hall, turned sour. It's a wordy and hard-hitting satire on the socially dysfunctional '70s when breaking up was easier than coming together.

## ▶ THE APARTMENT

DRAMA | 1960 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BILLY WILDER
CAST:
JACK LEMMON, SHIRLEY MACLAINE
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

Bud Baxter (Jack Lemmon) is down and out in the corporate rat race, but that doesn't deter him from nurturing grand dreams of scaling up the company ladder. And when he doesn't succeed by sheer dint of hard work, he tries other means. Like, renting out his centrally located Manhattan apartment to his boss for his clandestine trysts. So what if he too loves his boss' girl, the vulnerable elevator girl (Shirley MacLaine). A hard-hitting satire on the underbelly of corporate ethics, *The Apartment* has a poignant romantic track that spices up the drama.

## ▶ APOCALYPSE NOW

WAR | 1973 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
CAST:
MARLON BRANDO, MARTIN SHEEN, ROBERT DUVALL
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS.

Captain Willard (Martin Sheen) is sent on a liquidation mission to capture renegade Colonel Kutz (Marlon Brando) who has set himself up as a god-like tribal leader in the heart of Vietcong jungles. En route, he meets the mentally unstable American soldier, Colonel Kilgore (Robert Duvall), who blares Wagner to his victims before flattening their villages. *Apocalypse Now* is another film on Vietnam, yet it's different from the rest. For, as director Francis Ford Coppola, said: "This film isn't about Vietnam. This film is Vietnam." Watch the horrors and futility of war in all its fury and pathos.

## ▶ AS GOOD AS IT GETS

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JAMES L. BROOKS
CAST:
JACK NICHOLSON, HELEN HUNT, GREG KINNEAR

Melvill (Jack Nicholson), a misanthrope writer of romantic fiction; Carol (Helen Hunt), a waitress who is also a harried single-mother; and Simon (Greg Kinnear), the low-on-inspiration gay artist: this is the trio that tries to do the tightrope walk and find an equilibrium in their tangled web of relationships. In *As Good As It Gets*, Melvill not only suffers from

**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, FOR BEST ACTOR (JACK NICHOLSON), BEST ACTRESS (HELEN HUNT).

Compulsive Obsessive Disorder but also is socially dysfunctional and fails to communicate with anyone around him. It takes a down-to-earth waitress who serves him breakfast every day and a sensitive artist who lives next-door to bring out the best in him. He learns that communication can be more than insults. It can be about love, understanding, empathy and friendship. With Nicholson playing his eccentric role to perfection, this unconventional story showcases love with all its angularities and oddities.

## ▶ BEN-HUR

DRAMA | 1959 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
WILLIAM WYLER
**CAST:**
CHARLTON HESTON, STEPHEN BOYD, JACK HAWKINS
**AWARDS:**
ELEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (CHARLTON HESTON).

In *Ben-Hur*, it's the era of Jesus Christ. But the drama is focused on the travails of Judah Ben-Hur, a Jew, who was unjustly sent to the galleys to work as a slave by his childhood friend, Messala (Stephen Boyd), who heads the Roman Garrison. But Ben-Hur (Charlton Heston) becomes a free man after he saves the life of the ship's commander (Jack Hawkins) and returns to take vengeance on Messala. Ben-Hur seeks to settle scores in the climactic chariot race. The race has become legendary in celluloid history. Choreographed by famous stuntman Yakima Kanutt, this 15-minute adrenalin-pumping action sequence leveraged the 212-minute epic to be part of film lore.

## ▶ BLADE RUNNER

SCI-FI | 1982 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
RIDLEY SCOTT
**CAST:**
HARRISON FORD, RUTGER HAUER, SEAN YOUNG

It's 2019 in Los Angeles, when the city has been reduced to a brooding, smog-enveloped and terror-filled landscape. The city forms the backdrop for a violent war between humans and cyborgs. Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) is a man with a mission. They call him the Blade Runner, a cop who has been assigned to seek out and exterminate Batty (Rutger Hauer) and a bunch of rogue Replicants, artificially engineered humans, who have escaped from the outer world and have entered planet Earth. As the human and the human-like battle for survival, the film exposes the spirit of humanity, warts and all. Truly a trendsetter, *Blade Runner* became a benchmark for all futuristic sci-fi films.

## ▶ BONNIE AND CLYDE

THRILLER | 1967 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ARTHUR PENN
CAST:
WARREN BEATTY, FAYE DUNAWAY
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

*Bonnie And Clyde*, a biopic, is a soft and romantic look at the life of Bonnie Parker (Faye Dunaway) and Clyde Barrow (Warren Beatty), two Texas robbers, who spent their short yet dramatic life robbing during the Great Depression. They are ruthless, violent and decidedly on the wrong side of law. Yet, despite the ethical imbalance, the film serenades the two as an adventurous couple, living out their romance and rebellion against a dull, staid, depressed world. With great chemistry, wild passion and loads of action, *Bonnie And Clyde* is for the gangsta rap cineaste.

## ▶ BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI

ACTION | 1957 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
DAVID LEAN
CAST:
ALEC GUINNESS, WILLIAM HOLDEN
AWARDS:
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST ACTOR (ALEC GUINNESS).

"One day the war will be over and I hope the people who use this bridge in years to come will remember how it was built and who built it," muses Colonel Nicholson (Alec Guinness) as his battalion of British POWs work for completion of the controversial bridge over the river Kwai. Set against World War II in a POW camp in Burma, *Bridge On The River Kwai* focuses on the confrontation between two men: the proud and disciplined British army officer, Colonel Nicholson, and the equally principled and patriotic Japanese officer, Colonel Saito (Sessue Hayakawa), who wants to use his POWs to build a bridge that would help the Japanese cross into Rangoon. Initially, the British officer refuses to relent, waving the Geneva Convention that states that POWs shall not be used for manual labour, but later acquiesces for the well-being of his comrades. The war is essentially reduced to a battle of wills between two strong personalities. The plot weaves through a maze of conflicting loyalties that arise when a renegade American POW (William Holden) tries to sabotage the bridge. With an award-winning performance by Alec Guinness and an awesome eye for detail, David Lean's film is classic war drama.

## ▶ BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID

CRIME | 1969 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
GEORGE ROY HILL
CAST:
PAUL NEWMAN, ROBERT REDFORD, KATHARINE ROSS
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

*Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid* is the best among films where two heroes occupy centre stage. Robert Redford is the deadly Sundance Kid who is an expert with guns and kills remorselessly, while Paul Newman is Butch Cassidy, the ruthless railroad robber, whose talkative nature hides a vicious streak. Together, they recreate the exploits of two of America's most infamous real-life outlaws and add a mystical romance to an immoral tale of heist and murder. When the American West becomes too wild for them, they head for distant Bolivia, which they believe is ideal for lawbreakers. Obviously, they are mistaken and meet a violent end. But the impression they leave

behind is of two charming rogues, who were more heroes than villains. Only movie lore can make this magical twist.

## ▶ CASABLANCA

DRAMA | 1942 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MICHAEL CURTIZ
**CAST:**
HUMPHREY BOGART, INGRID BERGMAN
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

War can never get more romantic than this. An embittered American expatriate, Ricky Blaine (Humphrey Bogart), meets his former flame (Ingrid Bergman) in a quaint Moroccan town that is about to be engulfed by the violence of World War II. Even as the duo reminisces and rekindles its old Parisian romance, Ricky knows that he must send his beloved to safety and settle for separation, 'coz that's what love's all about. Interestingly, *Casablanca* features among the top three in all lists of Best Loved Films and remains one of cinema's most memorable romances. If Humphrey Bogart's Ricky Blaine lingers as the most mesmerizing lover on celluloid then his saloon, Café Americain, is perhaps the most exotic setting for love to bloom. *Casablanca* is a must for diehard romantics.

## ▶ CHINATOWN

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROMAN POLANSKI
**CAST:**
JACK NICHOLSON, FAYE DUNAWAY, JOHN HUSTON
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST SCREENPLAY.

With one of Jack Nicholson's most memorable performances, *Chinatown* is film noir at its best. Nicholson plays a private detective who has been hired for a routine case of adultery. But when the subject of his investigation, a municipal official in Los Angeles water department, accidentally drowns and goons and murderers begin to threaten our nosey detective, the film turns into an art house thriller. Nicholson is hell- bent on uncovering the corruption in the public department – a reflection of the LA Water Wars in the 1930s – even though it means standing up to the dead man's menacing business partner (John Huston) and getting embroiled in a romantic liaison with the deceased's widow (Faye Dunaway) who is mysterious and enigmatic. *Chinatown* is a gripping picture of the mess that lies behind the glittering city lights.

## ▶ CITIZEN KANE

DRAMA | 1942 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ORSON WELLES
**CAST:**
ORSON WELLES, DOROTHY COMINGORE, WILLIAM ALLAND
**AWARDS:**
NINE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE

A newspaper tycoon dies a lonely death, uttering on his deathbed the last mysterious word, "Rosebud". Arousing immense curiosity, the word becomes the focus of an investigation by a battery of newsmen. *Citizen Kane*'s towering portrait of a media giant drew parallels from real life for the hero, Charles Foster Kane (Orson Welles), was reportedly patterned on William Randolph Hearst, the 1940s answer to Bill Gates, Ted Turner and Rupert Murdoch, all rolled into one. Kane, who begins his journalistic career as a champion of the

AND BEST ACTOR (ORSON WELLES).

underdog, follows the usual trajectory of power, glamour, money and fame that replace his cause-oriented motives. And as journalists try to decode his life while trying to find the meaning of "Rosebud", they draw the picture of a lonely man at the top, trapped in a loveless marriage, a doomed extramarital affair and a cold mansion. The film is timeless, simply because there is a "rosebud" in every man's life. Rosebud was the name of a sled that was taken away from Kane when he was being sent to boarding school. Metaphorically, the word symbolizes the universal yearning for unbridled joyousness and innocence that elude mankind. In all lists of chartbusters, *Citizen Kane* is acclaimed as Hollywood's best film.

## ▶ CITY LIGHTS

ROMANCE | 1931 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
CHARLES CHAPLIN
CAST:
CHARLES CHAPLIN, VIRGINIA CHERRIL

A tramp (Charles Chaplin) falls in love with a blind girl who sells flowers on the streets of a heartless city. He decides to make enough money to restore her eyesight, even if it means a tryst with the mean underbelly throbbing beneath the glittering city lights. This includes a stint in the boxing ring, where he has nothing to fall back on, except his underdog agility. But the tramp is a quintessential hero who manages to fulfill his dreams. The girl's eyesight is restored and she ends up selling flowers in her flower shop. The tramp ends up serving a jail stint, unsure if his romance will actually bloom. Chaplin's most heartwarming silent film, *City Lights* became a hit even though it came three years after the talkies had taken over Hollywood. Silence is truly golden.

## ▶ THE DARK KNIGHT

DRAMA | 2008 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
CAST:
CHRISTIAN BALE, HEATH LEDGER, AARON ECKHART, MAGGIE GYLLENHAAL
AWARDS:
2 OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (HEATH LEDGER)

Batman may be the Dark Knight, but the Shining Knight who steals the show is the manic, irrepressible Joker. Heath Ledger pitches in a rare performance as Joker, Batman's arch-rival. Ledger's Joker is even more hypnotic than Nicholson's Joker in Batman (1989). Indeed, Christopher Nolan deserves high praise for bridging the gap between pop art and pure art. Initially, our super-hero is in an introspective mood, unsure about his role in vice-ridden Gotham City that, he feels, needs a hero with a face, rather than a mysterious, masked man in a rubber suit. Gotham seems to find such a hero in district attorney Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart) who has put most criminals behind bars. Except the Joker, the painted-faced evil incarnate, who proclaims himself as an agent of chaos and likes to carve smiles on people's faces after asking, "Why so serious?" The Joker's mission to corrupt the city's soul seems accomplished when hero Harvey metamorphoses into Harvey Two-Face, a disfigured figure who feels it's futile being decent in an indecent world. But hey,

there's Batman, remember? Although one almost tends to forget him because of the heady spell the Joker casts each time he swaggers onto screen with his devilish act and quotable quotes. This, though the Batmobile and Batman's antics still work their magic. But finally, the Joker hits the nail on the head when he gatecrashes into a party and grandly declares, "Ladies and Gentlemen, we are the entertainers for the night." Super!!

## ▶ THE DEPARTED

THRILLER | 2006 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN SCORSESE
**CAST:**
JACK NICHOLSON, LEONARDO DICAPRIO, MATT DAMON
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTION.

*The Departed* is an absolute delight. And it really doesn't matter if it's a remake of Hong Kong blockbuster *Infernal Affairs*. Because the Boston cops and robbers create a whole new world on screen: one where crime becomes glitzy, the mob is dizzy and policing becomes a crazy tryst with death and violence. If Matt Damon is deadly as Colin Sullivan, the infiltrator in the police department, Leonardo DiCaprio lends a manic energy to his rendition of Billy Costigan, an undercover cop, who tries to cope with the evil that unfolds before his eyes. But having a ball amidst them all is good old Jack Nicholson as Frank Costella, a gangster, who loves to play it loud. He exudes devilish glee as he rules the underworld. However, it is the racy screenplay – almost like a revised *The Godfather* script, complete with pungent quotes – and cutting-edge action that make the film a must-see.

## ▶ DIE HARD

ACTION | 1988 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN MCTIERNAN
**CAST:**
BRUCE WILLIS, ALAN RICKMAN

In *Die Hard*, Bruce Willis reinvents the traditional Hollywood cop drama in his bravura portrayal of NYPD detective John McLane. He comes to Los Angeles on family work and ends up spending Christmas with a bunch of terrorists. All that McLane wants is to patch up with his estranged wife. He goes to meet her in her swanky new office that is soon transformed into a battleground. Terrorists hold the inmates hostage and threaten to blow up the building, but for the tough cop in a singlet. *Die Hard* is a gritty thriller with loads of violent action where Bruce Willis opts for guts than gadgets. The fact that his adversary is the enigmatic Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman), a suave and sartorially advanced German terrorist, adds to the thrill of this edgy cat and mouse game.

## ▶ DOCTOR ZHIVAGO

ROMANCE | 1965 | ★★★★

*Somewhere my love, there will be time to sing*...David Lean's adaptation of Boris Pasternak's award-winning novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, introduced the world to Maurice Jerre's landmark love ballad *Lara's Theme*, the resonance of which still rings loud and

DIRECTION:
DAVID LEAN
CAST:
OMAR SHARIF,
JULIE CHRISTIE
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS.

clear. But that was secondary. Crucially, it sets the note for the tender love story between Doctor Yuri Zhivago (Omar Sharif), the Russian doctor-poet, and Lara Antipova (Julie Christie), the woman he loves and loses through the historic Bolshevik Revolution. Not as epical as David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*, yet *Doctor Zhivago* remains one of the most faithful celluloid adaptations of a literary classic.

## ▶ DR. NO

ACTION | 1962 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
TERENCE YOUNG
CAST:
SEAN CONNERY,
URSULA ANDRESS,
JOSEPH WISEMAN

A glorious debut for one of Hollywood's most popular franchises, *Dr. No* projects James Bond, a celluloid version of Ian Fleming's fictional figure, as a dauntless hero who saves the world from evil megalomaniacs. Sean Connery slips effortlessly into the role of invincible special agent Bond who is licensed to kill and lives life on the wild side, while bullets fly and beautiful girls sigh. On a mission to find out the truth behind the murder of his colleagues, Bond reaches the mysterious island of Dr. No (Joseph Wiseman), only to uncover a sinister plot that is aimed at wiping out the US space programme. *Dr. No* marks the beginning of a whole new genre in Hollywood and showcases all its irresistible trademarks – slick action, sleek gadgets, oomph girls and double-dyed villains – juxtaposed against the smart-talking and sharp-shooting Bond.

## ▶ DR. STRANGELOVE OR HOW I LEARNED HOW TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB

COMEDY | 1969 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STANLEY KUBRICK
CAST:
PETER SELLERS,
GEORGE C. SCOTT

See what mean men can do with mean machines. In *Dr. Strangelove Or How I Learned How To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb*, Colonel Jack D. Ripper believes the Soviets are all set to contaminate America's water supply. The loony colonel orders a B-52 bomber to drop a nuclear bomb on Soviet territory, without knowing that the Soviets have a doomsday machine in place, empowered to launch a counter nuclear-offensive. So, how does the world save itself from a nuclear holocaust? Kubrick's powerful indictment of the N-bomb works as a brilliant black comedy, even as it showcases Peter Sellers in riveting form, playing three characters in one go: the harried American President, Merkin Muffley, his demented, wheelchair-bound strategic adviser, Dr. Strangelove, and a befuddled British officer.

## ▶ E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

SCI-FI | 1982 | ★★★★★

We'd call *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* an ageless movie. First, because its appeal is universal, irrespective of the viewer's age. And, second, because each time you watch it, it recreates the

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
HENRY THOMAS, DREW BARRYMORE, DEE WALLACE
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

same delightful sense of fun that it did when you saw it first. Spielberg creates sheer magic in this movie about a rare friendship between a lonely alien and a bunch of kids who are trying to cope with their parent's recent divorce and life without their father. For the kids, the friendly alien with the funny face ends up as a surrogate father, secret buddy and loneliness buster. For E.T., the kids end up as friendly humans and surrogate family on an alien planet. Add to this the spectacle of bicycles flying across the moon, a spaceship landing on earth, the fear of a hostile government trying to separate newfound friends, and you have the perfect tale on love and friendship that transcends galaxies and boundaries.

## ▶ FATAL ATTRACTION

THRILLER | 1987 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ADRIAN LYNE
CAST:
MICHAEL DOUGLAS, GLENN CLOSE, ANNE ARCHER

You'll never forget the bunny-boiling Alex Forrest (Glenn Close) who returns to terrorise her lover (Michael Douglas) and his family, because she can't see herself as simply a one-night stand. In turn, the happily married man doesn't want to jeopardize his life for a careless fling. It's a thrilling take on the flip side of sexual promiscuity, with a disturbing moral tilt against the "other" woman. Ironically, it's Glenn Close's wicked woman act that stands out the most, though Douglas' harried husband role also grabs eyeballs.

## ▶ FORREST GUMP

DRAMA | 1994 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROBERT ZEMECKIS
CAST:
TOM HANKS, ROBIN WRIGHT PENN, SALLY FIELDS
AWARDS:
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (TOM HANKS).

*Forrest Gump* articulates the American dream in a novel way. The premise is simple: even a dimwit can be a hero and play a historic role in the good 'ole US as long as he is benevolent, benign and guileless. Gump is one such low-IQ hero who loves his mother (Sally Fields), loves his girlfriend (Robin Wright Penn), loves his nation and does his bit of nation-building by being present through all pivotal moments in American history from the '60s to the '80s. He's the guy who shows Elvis how to shake his hips; the soldier who saves American lives in Vietnam; the hero who shakes hands with JFK; the sprinter guru who runs through the length and breadth of America, showcasing the simple truth that nice guys do finish first. And he's the devoted lover who finds the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, after his girlfriend goes through the regular rebel-without-a-cause angst of the '70s. With Hanks in great form, this one is truly feel-good cinema.

## ▶ THE FRENCH CONNECTION

THRILLER | 1971 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
WILLIAM FRIEDKIN

When it was released in 1971, *The French Connection* became one of the highest grossing films of the year and swept the

CAST:
GENE HACKMAN, ROY SCHEIDER, FERNANDO REY
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTION, BEST ACTOR.

Oscars, winning all major awards. And mostly because of the antics of the anti-hero, Popeye Doyle (Gene Hackman), a racist, neurotic, vicious and brutal NYC cop who has just one chance to redeem his failing career graph. He must bust the illegal drug racket that begins in Marseilles and ends in New York, involving a $32 million smuggled shipment of high-grade heroin. With its gritty chase sequences and unapologetic shoot-outs, this is one of the most hard-hitting, tell-it-like-it-is, cop capers of Hollywood.

## ▶ FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

WAR | 1953 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
FRED ZINNEMAN
CAST:
BURT LANCASTER, MONTGOMERY CLIFF, DEBORAH KERR
AWARDS:
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

Private Prewitt (Montgomery Cliff) reports for duty in Oahu, Hawaii, just before D-Day and realizes that war is a larger-than-life drama than he'd ever imagined. Prewitt refuses to join the company's boxing team and ends up as the target of unremitting harassment, even as his Sergeant (Burt Lancaster) romances his commander's wife (Deborah Kerr) on the sun-kissed Hawaiian shores. Prewitt finds his mate in a club hostess (Donna Reed), but before romance can bloom, bombs explode, as the Japanese attack Oahu on December 7, 1941. A great war-epic, *From Here To Eternity* traces the life of an American soldier with finesse and drama.

## ▶ GANDHI

DRAMA | 1982 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH
CAST:
BEN KINGSLEY, CANDICE BERGEN, ROHINI HATTANGADY
AWARDS:
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (BEN KINGSLEY).

Hollywood's modern-day epic, *Gandhi*, catapulted India and the idea of India on the global stage more brilliantly than any politician could have done. Described as Richard Attenborough's labour of love, the biopic captures Mahatma Gandhi like never before. More importantly, it traverses through a vast canvas, beginning with Gandhi's early trysts with leadership in South Africa and ends with his unique crusade against the British Raj, which ended in Swaraj. The heart and soul of *Gandhi* is Ben Kingsley who transforms Gandhi into a moral force, a visionary idea, even as he holds onto his intense humanism. History never got better and bolder on celluloid.

## ▶ GLADIATOR

ACTION | 2000 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
RIDLEY SCOTT
CAST:
RUSSELL CROWE, JOAQUIN PHOENIX, CONNIE NIELSON

A colossus of a film, *Gladiator* makes the Roman Empire hip and happening with its adrenalin-pumping battle scenes and high-on-testosterone close combat sequences. Set in 180 A.D., the film traces the vengeance of Roman General Maximus (Russell Crowe), who escapes death at the hands of self-crowned Emperor Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix), and becomes an enslaved, enraged Gladiator, waiting for his final confrontation. In reality, Emperor Marcus Aurelius (Richard Harris) has made

AWARDS:
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Maximus the crown-designate as he realizes his son, Commodus, would be a weak heir. But Commodus betrays and kills his father and also murders Maximus' family. He then thinks his troubles are over, but the General returns as the invincible Gladiator. Hailed as a sandal-and-sword epic, *Gladiator* celebrates valour and showcases Russell Crowe as the quintessential male conqueror: all brawn and brooding grandeur.

## ▶ THE GODFATHER

DRAMA | 1972 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION:
FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
CAST:
MARLON BRANDO,
AL PACINO,
DIANE KEATON,
JAMES CAAN
AWARDS:
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST ACTOR (MARLON BRANDO).

Based on Mario Puzo's best-selling book, *The Godfather* traces the transfer of power from the ageing patriarch of an Italian Mafioso family that heads the American crime syndicate, to his reluctant son who inherits the mantle, despite being embroiled in violent gang wars. *The Godfather* has gone down in Hollywood's history as one of the best crime sagas with some of the most memorable lines in its soundtrack. Don Corleone (Marlon Brando) may be a ruthless gangster but his violence does not detract from his being a benevolent family man. Yet, when rivals try to usurp his power, he is forced to appoint his youngest and brightest son, Michael Corleone (Al Pacino), to protect the Corleone family's fortunes. The singular shot of a once genteel Michael swivelling arrogantly on his father's chair, after settling all bloody scores, is the stuff of classic cult cinema.

## ▶ THE GODFATHER: PART II

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
CAST:
AL PACINO,
ROBERT DE NIRO,
DIANE KEATON
AWARDS:
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

The sequel to *The Godfather* contains a flashback into the journey of immigrant Vito Corleone through New York's violent underworld in the 1920s, before he became the undisputed mafia don, even as it documents his son Michael's attempts to expand the crime syndicate as its current head. Rarely do sequels live up to the original. *The Godfather: Part II* does, with powerhouse performances by Robert De Niro and Al Pacino as the two dons, Vito and Michael. While Vito's antecedents showcase the typical immigrant experience where crime becomes a means to ward off poverty, Michael's efforts to retain the undisputed supremacy of the Corleone family in the world of crime leave him lonely at the top.

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## ▶ FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

WAR | 1953 | ★★★★

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**CAST:**
MARLON BRANDO, AL PACINO, DIANE KEATON, JAMES CAAN
**AWARDS:**
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Based on Mario Puzo's best-selling book, *The Godfather* traces the transfer of power from the ageing patriarch of an Italian Mafioso family that heads the American crime syndicate, to his reluctant son who inherits the mantle, despite being embroiled in violent gang wars. *The Godfather* has gone down in Hollywood's history as one of the best crime sagas with some of the most memorable lines in its soundtrack. Don Corleone (Marlon Brando) may be a ruthless gangster but his violence does not detract from his being a benevolent family man. Yet, when rivals try to usurp his power, he is forced to appoint his youngest and brightest son, Michael Corleone (Al Pacino), to protect the Corleone family's fortunes. The singular shot of a once genteel Michael swivelling arrogantly on his father's chair, after settling all bloody scores, is the stuff of classic cult cinema.

## ▶ THE GODFATHER: PART II

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
**CAST:**
AL PACINO, ROBERT DE NIRO, DIANE KEATON
**AWARDS:**
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

The sequel to *The Godfather* contains a flashback into the journey of immigrant Vito Corleone through New York's violent underworld in the 1920s, before he became the undisputed mafia don, even as it documents his son Michael's attempts to expand the crime syndicate as its current head. Rarely do sequels live up to the original. *The Godfather: Part II* does, with powerhouse performances by Robert De Niro and Al Pacino as the two dons, Vito and Michael. While Vito's antecedents showcase the typical immigrant experience where crime becomes a means to ward off poverty, Michael's efforts to retain the undisputed supremacy of the Corleone family in the world of crime leave him lonely at the top.

## ▶ GONE WITH THE WIND

DRAMA | 1939 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
VICTOR FLEMING
**CAST:**
CLARK GABLE,
VIVIEN LEIGH
**AWARDS:**
EIGHT OSCARS,
INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS
(VIVIEN LEIGH),
BEST FILM AND
BEST DIRECTOR.

Based on Margaret Mitchell's cult romantic epic, the film is epical too. It stands out for its characterization and the wide sweep of its canvas that covers the passing of an entire era in American history. Set against the Civil War, *Gone With The Wind* traces the wild and stormy relationship between pulp fiction's best-loved lovers, Scarlett O'Hara (Vivien Leigh) and Rhett Butler (Clark Gable). As the war ravages her family, fortunes and dreams, feisty Scarlett tries to survive without losing her self-respect and arrogance. And the only man who understands her bravery is one who irks her the most: haughty gadfly Rhett Butler. But before Scarlett can decode the love-hate conundrum, it's too late. The genteel South has slipped away into a new materialistic world order and Rhett has simply got tired of waiting. But Scarlett signs off with her legendary optimism: "Tomorrow is another day." Till today, she remains the most popular firebrand of cult cinema.

## ▶ THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

WESTERN | 1966 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
SERGIO LEONE
**CAST:**
CLINT EASTWOOD,
ELI WALLACH,
LEE VAN CLEEF

*The Good, The Bad, The Ugly* starts as a simple gold hunt by a trio of petty thieves who wind their way through the Civil War. But the film ends up as a gigantic thriller, with some memorable cowboy cuts that remain the glory and pride of westerns in Hollywood. Undoubtedly, this is Sergio Leone's landmark film that creates three unforgettable characters: Angel Eyes (Lee Van Cleef), the Bad; Tuco (Eli Wallach), the Ugly; and Blondie (Clint Eastwood), the Good. They criss-cross the desert of Colorado in search of a bounty that has been hidden by a Confederate soldier in a cemetery. Their destiny is inextricably intertwined since Angel Eyes knows the name of the soldier who has buried the gold; Tuco knows the cemetery where the gold is buried; and Blondie knows the grave that contains the loot. An edge-of-the-seat-thriller, the film has breathtaking western heroics.

## ▶ THE GRADUATE

DRAMA | 1967 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MIKE NICHOLS
**CAST:**
DUSTIN HOFFMAN,
ANNE BANCROFT,
KATHERINE ROSS
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST
DIRECTOR.

*The Graduate* may not be a typical teenage coming-of-age film, yet its concerns are easily recognizable. Ben Braddock's graduation party is quite typical as are his post-graduate fumbling with sex and the future: he is completely unsure about both. While dropping Mrs. Robinson (Anne Bancroft), the wife of his father's business partner, home after the party, he finds himself being seduced into a wild sexual relationship with her. Initially, he views it as a rebellion against his parents' affluent, upper-middle class conformism. But when he encounters Elaine, Mrs. Robinson's daughter, he realizes that sexual liberation can hardly be a substitute for love. Peppered with some of the best

songs by Simon & Garfunkel, *The Graduate* catapulted the young Dustin Hoffman to instant stardom.

## ▶ THE GRAPES OF WRATH

DRAMA | 1940 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN FORD
**CAST:**
HENRY FONDA, JANE DARWELL
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR.

Based on John Steinbeck's Pulitzer-winning novel, *The Grapes Of Wrath*, this film is a moving testament to the heroic human spirit. It captures the travails of the Joad family who travels to California, the land of plenty, after losing their source of livelihood during the Great Depression. The film traces the metamorphosis of a sharecropper's son, Tom Joad (Henry Fonda), from a bar room brawler and lawbreaker to a diehard union leader. His family tries to fight for survival in poverty-ridden California, after being forced to migrate from their land in the Midwest. A strong social document of the great divide between haves and have-nots, *The Grapes Of Wrath* remains topical even today in a world where there are still "one, two, three guys with a million acres and a hundred thousand starving farmers". Even today, the world awaits Tom who promised his ma in his memorable farewell speech: "Wherever you can look, wherever there's a fight, so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever there's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there...."

## ▶ HAMLET

DRAMA | 1948 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
LAURENCE OLIVIER
**CAST:**
LAURENCE OLIVIER, JEAN SIMMONS
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR (LAURENCE OLIVIER).

Undoubtedly, one of the best celluloid adaptations of Shakespeare, *Hamlet* is essentially a labour of love by one of Hollywood's greatest actors. Laurence Olivier plays the eponymous Prince of Denmark who sets out to avenge his father's death and showcases a hero weighed down by the tragedy of power, deceit and indecisiveness. Olivier's *Hamlet* is essentially a hero damned by lack of resolution, as described in his famous lament: "To be or not to be, that is the question."

## ▶ HEAT

THRILLER | 1995 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MICHAEL MANN
**CAST:**
ROBERT DE NIRO, AL PACINO

In *Heat*, Robert De Niro is the perfect robber and Al Pacino the perfect cop. What happens when two such virtuosos meet? Sheer heat! Their neatly etched characters form the highpoint of this cops and robbers film. Set against the backdrop of the LA crime world, the film is essentially a long chase sequence where Pacino tries to nail De Niro who wants to escape to a better life after his last heist. *Heat* has enough drama to establish the life and times of the two lead players and position them in their imperfect lives as equally matched heroes with similar problems

and doggedness to succeed. The confrontation scene where the cop and robber dare each other over a cup of coffee is the most riveting one.

## ▶ HIGH NOON

WESTERN | 1957 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
FRED ZINNEMANN
CAST:
CARY GRANT, GRACE KELLY
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (CARY GRANT) AND BEST DIRECTOR.

It is a monumental day for ageing sheriff Will Kane (Cary Grant) for he is giving up his tin star after marrying his young and beautiful girlfriend, Amy Fowler (Grace Kelly). But before Kane can walk into peaceful retirement, there is a task that he needs to accomplish. He wants to protect his town from a gangster who has been freed from prison after Kane sent him there as a lifer. And Kane must do it alone since the townsmen refuse to join him. It's a simple, stark and stunning show of valour, with Cary Grant pitching in a scintillating performance as a moral, upright marshal who knows he must fight back, even if alone, against evil. Easy to see where *Sholay* came from.

## ▶ HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY

DRAMA | 1941 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN FORD
CAST:
WALTER PIDGEON, MAUREEN O'HARA
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

Shifting gears from the westerns he loved, John Ford made *How Green Was My Valley* as a heartwarming tribute to the heroism and resilience of the ordinary American. Set in a small mining town, the film trapezes through the highs and lows of life as it captures the angst of the protagonist, Huw Norgan, who narrates his story in flashback. An old man, he is leaving his Welsh town. With time, the happy and hardworking mining community has fallen prey to the unbridled pace of development and the changing face of labour. Consequently, young men migrate for better options while old men flounder in poverty. What stands out is the innate goodness of the down-and-out yet dignified souls who constitute the moral fabric of the place.

## ▶ IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT

ROMANCE | 1934 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
FRANK CAPRA
CAST:
CLARK GABLE, CLAUDETTE CAULBERT
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR, BEST ACTRESS, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE.

A spoilt runaway heiress (Claudette Caulbert) meets an out-of-work journalist (Clark Gable) on a bus ride from Florida to New York. Sparks fly. The mismatched two start by detesting each other but end up desperately in love. Back home, we have seen *Dil Hai Ki Manta Nahin* made in the same vein. The heart truly has its own reasons and romance never gets outdated, despite being formulaic and super-saccharine candyfloss. *It Happened One Night*, Frank Capra's sweetest film, is enlivened by some crackling chemistry between a sardonic Clark and a saucy Claudette.

## ▶ JAWS

HORROR | 1975 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
PETER SCHEIDER,
ROBERT SHAW,
RICHARD DREYFUSS
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS.

A giant shark sails into a peaceful tourist beach and begins terrorising the pleasure-seekers. It's left to three brave men – a cop, a fisherman and a scientist – to hunt the killer shark and bring back normalcy. Based on Peter Benchley's bestseller, *Jaws*, Spielberg's technical celluloid wonder became a stupendous hit, even as it worked as a prequel to his dinosaur epics, *The Jurassic Park* series, which worked on the same terror formula of predator animals and puny humans.

## ▶ JURASSIC PARK

SCI-FI | 1993 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
SAM NEILL, LAURA DERN,
JEFF GOLDBLUM,
RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS.

Don't play with nature, says Steven Spielberg in this super shocker that redefines the science of special effects. 'Larger-than-life' acquires a whole new meaning in *Jurassic Park* as T-Rex chomps and seems to thrust his jaws in your very face. It wants to make you creep through this hi-tech theme park where an eccentric millionaire (Richard Attenborough) brings to life his fantasies about a long-forgotten past by cloning dinosaurs. It could have been an idyllic opening for this prehistoric phantasmagoria, but for the security breach that has the hungry carnivores rushing into all the wrong places and feasting on humans who were misguided enough to think they were masters of all creatures, big and small.

## ▶ KILL BILL VOLUME 1

ACTION | 2003 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
QUENTIN TARANTINO
CAST:
UMA THURMAN,
LUCY LIU,
DAVID CARRADINE

*Kill Bill Volume 1* is more about the art of violence than violence per se. Who is a warrior and what is war: Tarantino uses a regular revenge tale to explore the ethics and art of mankind's favourite sport. The central character, simply called The Bride (Uma Thurman), is a modern-day samurai who rises from a long coma after being hit with a bullet in her head. She aims to strike vengeance against her former lover and boss, Bill (David Carradine), who tried to kill her on her wedding day because she was marrying another guy. Her aim in doing so was to give her unborn child a normal life, shorn of violence. Once The

Bride rises from the dead, she dons a yellow suit, equips herself with a bushido blade, draws up a list of her tormentors and sets out to settle scores. A Daniel comes to justice! With excellently choreographed action sequences, pulsating with nervous energy, and with Thurman in great form, *Kill Bill* is truly Tarantino's best.

## ▶ KING KONG

ACTION | 2005 | ★★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PETER JACKSON
**CAST:**
NAOMI WATTS, ADRIEN BRODY, JACK BURNS AND THE GR-GR- GORILLA
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS.

After his artistic trilogy on *Lord Of The Rings*, Peter Jackson switches gear in *King Kong* and goes commercial. He picks up the 1933 film and re-fuels it with an energy that is pure 21st century pop art. If movie making is about spectacle, spectacle is what you'll get, decides the director – and no apologies for that. Once the motley crew of down-and-out performers (a filmmaker who wants to make his million-dollar movie, an actress who is desperate for a role, a playwright who is desperately in love) reaches Skull Island, the monster show is relentless. The thrill quotient reaches breaking point as King Kong battles dinosaurs and humans ward off giant squids, tarantulas, spiders, bats and what-you-will. And when he puts the god-knows-how-many-pounds gorilla in New York, it's magnified Manhattan mayhem with moments of tender mush as the wisp of a girl tries to comfort a wailing monster. *King Kong* is the monster of all make-believe movie lore. You can't get bigger, beastly and brattier than this when it comes to showbiz.

## ▶ KRAMER VS. KRAMER

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT BENTON
**CAST:**
DUSTIN HOFFMAN, MERYL STREEP
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR.

And we always thought that kids couldn't cope without their moms. *Kramer Vs. Kramer* became a blockbuster simply because it pointed out poignantly that dads too are indispensable. And, sometimes, when it comes to making a choice, dad could rate higher than mom in the kid's preference list. The film's singular appeal lies in the stumbling growth of workaholic Ted Kramer (Dustin Hoffman) towards parenthood, after he wakes up one night to find his neglected wife, Joanna (Meryl Streep), has walked out on him and their young son. Ted fumbles his way through his single parent status and balances his demanding professional commitment with preparing French toast for his son and reading bedtime stories to him. So much so, that the two don't want to separate when mom wants her son back. *Kramer Vs. Kramer* is sweet and sentimental, with some great performances by Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep.

## ▶ THE LAST EMPEROR

DRAMA | 1987 | ★★★★½

He was venerated as Lord Of Ten Thousand Years, yet he was history's biggest figurative head who had no power and ruled

**DIRECTION:**
BERNADO BERTOLUCCI
**CAST:**
JOHN LONE, JOAN CHEN, PETER O'TOOLE
**AWARDS:**
NINE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

over nothing. Bernado Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* is a masterpiece because it juxtaposes this nothingness against the opulence of the legendary Chinese Dragon Throne. It also captures the death of an era – Imperialism – even as another is born – Communism. The tragedy of China's Last Emperor, Pu-Yi (John Lone), resonates through the very crevices of the Forbidden City. Pu-Yi ascends the throne at three, abdicates it at seven and remains a prisoner throughout his life. First, his childhood is held ransom by the binds of royalty. Later, he ends up as a captive in a Communist re-education camp. Finally, he finds happiness as a lowly gardener in Peking. *The Last Emperor* is an epic study of the vagaries of history.

## ▶ LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

DRAMA | 1962 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
DAVID LEAN
**CAST:**
PETER O'TOOLE, OMAR SHARIF, ALEC GUINNESS, ANTHONY QUINN
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

This epic film is an account of the conflicting loyalties plaguing British military officer, T.E. Lawrence, during World War I when he is commissioned to help Arabs fight Turks. David Lean's *Lawrence Of Arabia* remains topical even today, with its philosophical documentation of the clash of cultures between the Orient and the Occident. Sent by his government to help Arabs, Lawrence (Peter O'Toole) begins to question British imperialism because, as he declares, his loyalty is with Britain and with "other" things, namely, the essential liberty and equality of all mankind. Small wonder then, Lawrence's biggest ally is the renegade Arab, Sherif Ali (Omar Sharif), who stands by him as bullets fly and cannon shells burst in the hostile desert terrain. Peter O'Toole's arresting performance, gripping screenplay and spectacular cinematography make this a classic movie.

## ▶ LEON THE PROFESSIONAL

THRILLER | 1994 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
LUC BESSON
**CAST:**
JEAN RENO, GARY OLDMAN, NATALIE PORTMAN

In *Leon The Professional*, a hardened hit man, Leon (Jean Reno), becomes the reluctant guardian of 12-year-old Mathilda (Natalie Portman) who has lost her family after corrupt cop Norman Stansfield (Gary Oldman) shoots them down at home. Mathilda wants to hire Leon's services to wreak vengeance against the killer and, in return, offers to do Leon's laundry and odd jobs. It's a strange Lolita-like relationship between a hardened criminal and a young girl who ends up venerating him and wanting to be like him. Meanwhile, Leon discovers a moral fibre within him and wants to mend his ways. But there isn't any schmaltzy sentimentality in this killer-turned-hero film. Instead, there's an explosion of in-your-face violence, as the oddly assorted two hang on to life.

## ▶ LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERTO BENIGNI
**CAST:**
ROBERTO BENIGNI, NICOLETTA BRASCHI, GIORGIO CANTARINI
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (ROBERTO BENIGNI).

*Life Is Beautiful*, a simple and lyrical film about war and death during the Holocaust, is inspired by a real-life quote. Benigni decided to make a movie about fascist Italy after he had read Trotsky's account about his encounter with death when he lay on a bunker, waiting for Stalin's hit men to kill him. In that moment of terror, Trotsky had written that he still thought, "life is beautiful". Benigni took these lines to look at the anti-Semitic movement in Italy during World War II. The story about love and life is woven around Guido, a waiter, who falls in love with Dora, a beautiful schoolteacher, and woos her with a fairy tale romance. But the idyll is short-lived as Guido and his son end up in an infamous concentration camp. There, in the midst of death and decay, Guido tries to extend the fairy tale by protecting his innocent child from the horrors of war. *Life Is Beautiful* works like poetry, fluid and fine, with a strong anti-war statement.

## ▶ THE LION KING

ANIMATION | 1994 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROGER ALLERS, ROB MINKOFF
**CAST:**
VOICE OF MATTHEW BRODERICK, JAMES EARL JONES, JEREMY IRONS, MOIRA KELLY
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

In *The Lion King*, Walt Disney elevated animation to a whole new level with his winsome allegory on leadership. And who better to give this *gyan* on leading nations, tribes and fellow-beings than the king of jungle. Of course, kingship isn't a lesson easily learnt and the crown always lies heavy on the head, as young Simba soon learns. The lion cub falls prey to a plot by which his father, King Mufasa, is killed by his menacing uncle, Scar. He usurps power after Simba flees into exile. But evil tyrants don't last long and after loads of song, dance and action, Simba returns to reclaim his kingship. With great songs by Elton John and Time Rice, dazzling backdrops and nail-biting action, this one is for the entire family.

## ▶ LORD OF THE RINGS: FELLOWSHIP OF THE RINGS

ACTION | 2001 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
PETER JACKSON
**CAST:**
ELIJAH WOOD, SEAN ASTIN, VIGGO MORTENSON, IAN MCKELLEN
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS.

Peter Jackson's powerful epic of good versus evil is a gripping celluloid version of J.R.R Tolkien's masterly tome, *Lord Of The Rings*, which created a fantasy world and a fantastic boy hero, much before Harry Potter. The journey of the endearing hobbit, Frodo, through treacherous Middle Earth to destroy the powerful ring he has inherited is the stuff of which epics are made. Specially, when Jackson chooses to treat this adventure as something more than mere child's play. Frodo and his friends must destroy the ring that has been forged by a malevolent wizard as a source of dark power. And the sole place it can be destroyed is the dreaded Mount Doom in Mordor where Frodo can only reach after battling demonic turncoat wizard Saruman (Christopher Lee) and his army of Dark Riders. Frodo has his

corps of friends: benevolent wizard Gandalf, human warrior Aragorn (Viggo Mortenson), and elf marksman (Orlando Bloom). The first in a three-part series, this one leaves you asking for more.

## ▶ LOVE STORY

ROMANCE | 1970 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ARTHUR HILLER
**CAST:**
ALI MACGRAW,
RYAN O'NEAL
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST MUSIC.

When Oliver met Jennifer, love happened. And how! Eric Segal's 20-minute paperback, *Love Story*, ended up as a classic romance that has endured through Hollywood's *hazaar* mutations on love. It's the simplest of love stories between the upmarket Harvard grad, Oliver Barrett IV (Ryan O'Neal), and the maverick, middle-class Radcliffe music student, Jennifer Cavalleri (Ali MacGraw). And yet, it has all the shades of an epic. Ollie and Jen's relationship not only transcends the ubiquitous class barriers in a polarized society, but also manages to outlast disease, death and destiny. Despite its tragic finality, *Love Story* is actually a celebration of love and life with perhaps one of the most quoted lines: "Love means never having to say you're sorry." Oh yeah!

## ▶ THE MASK

COMEDY | 1996 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
CHUCK RUSSEL
**CAST:**
JIM CARREY,
CAMERON DIAZ

Life takes a sudden turn into the supernatural for shy and introverted Stanley Ipkiss (Jim Carrey) one desultory evening when he finds a mask floating in the water. The down and out bank clerk retrieves the mask and, just for fun, puts it on his face and abracadabra! He turns into an over-the-top superhero. He can now, at will, escape the drudgery of life and also find the girl of his dreams (Cameron Diaz). So what if his tongue literally hangs out and his eyes maniacally pop out as soon as he spies the sexy Cameron Diaz. A sweet fable on being oneself, *The Mask* catapulted Jim Carrey and his astounding histrionics to instant stardom. Laugh your way through this mad caper.

## ▶ THE MATRIX

SCI-FI | 1999 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
LARRY AND ANDY WACHOWSKI
CAST:
KEANU REEVES, LAURENCE FISHBURNE, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

If a filmmaker can take complex hi-tech terms like Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence, make them cogent fare, and keep the technologically challenged viewer rapt, he has achieved a marvel. And with its innovative blend of philosophy, science and drama, *The Matrix* is that marvel. Not forgetting its amazing special effects that make an art out of action. The film dwells on the age-old conflict between the physical world that is narrow, limited, constricting and the expansive canvas of the mind, where there are no frontiers. Through its plot, it also throws up a topically tantalising debate on the supremacy of man over machine. The plot focuses on the gallant attempts of a bunch of heroes to save Zion: the only human city left in a mechanised 2099. The legend of Neo (Keanu Reeves) and his attempt to save the human mind results in two other high-octane action sequels: *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions*.

## ▶ MIDNIGHT COWBOY

DRAMA | 1969 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN SCHLESINGER
CAST:
DUSTIN HOFFMAN, JOHN VOIGHT
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

Naive Texan Joe Black (John Voight) moves to New York in search of a good life and ends up as a male prostitute in seedy Manhattan. The only bright spot in his life being the strange bond he strikes up with a sleazy street conman, Ratso Rizo (Dustin Hoffman), who guides him through Eldorado's underbelly. The high point of *Midnight Cowboy* is the friendship between two down-and-out men who come together despite their differences. Their common bond is an undying hope for a better life, even as New York's harsh reality and loneliness bleed their very soul. Powerful performances by the two lead players and the chilling encapsulation of big city blues make this a memorable film.

## ▶ MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

ACTION | 1996 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BRIAN DE PALMA
CAST:
TOM CRUISE, JON VOIGHT, EMMANUELLE BEART

*Mission: Impossible* was the celluloid rendition of the popular television series of the 1960s, featuring a Bond-like hero who was on a Bond-like mission to save the world from sundry enemies. Agent Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) is the action hero for Jim Phelps (Jon Voight) Impossible Missions Force and was thrown into the battlefield whenever the threat — to world peace, rule of law, civilized society — grew too big to handle. This time, he must save the NOC list — an account of all the super secret agents working for the US — from falling into the hands of an international arms dealer (Vanessa Redgrave). Sprinkled generously with mind-boggling action sequences, the first film in a trilogy worked like an edge of the seat thriller and catapulted Tom Cruise to the status of a debonair action hero.

## ▶ MODERN TIMES

DRAMA | 1934 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
CHARLES CHAPLIN
**CAST:**
CHARLES CHAPLIN

Charles Chaplin's powerful critique of the machine age, *Modern Times*, establishes him as one of the most mesmerizing pantomime artists. Watch him trying to keep pace with the soulless grind as he fixes bolts in the factory treadmill or hangs on to his dignity as the bungling waiter and you know it's a heartless world out there for underdogs, the underprivileged and social outcasts. *Modern Times* is a sensitive, humanistic document in a deadening world of ruthless modernity and unplanned mechanization.

## ▶ MY FAIR LADY

DRAMA | 1964 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GEORGE CUCKOR
**CAST:**
AUDREY HEPBURN, REX HARRISON
**AWARDS:**
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR(REX HARRISON).

A misogynist professor of phonetics has a bet with his best friend. The challenge is to transform an uncouth, working class girl into a high-society lady by merely working on her language and intonation. Obviously, he doesn't account for the resultant changes that involve both emotional and attitudinal makeovers. End result? The all-knowing, arrogant Professor Higgins (Rex Harrison) is at a loss for words when the common flower girl, Eliza Dolittle (Audrey Hepburn), turns into a sophisticate who not only fits in perfectly with the upper-crust crowd but also steals away his heart. A delightful musical fairy tale, *My Fair Lady* showcases love triumphing against all odds, including class barriers.

## ▶ ON THE WATERFRONT

DRAMA | 1954 | ★★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ELIA KAZAN
**CAST:**
MARLON BRANDO, ROD STEIGER, EVA MARIE SAINT
**AWARDS:**
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR AND BEST ACTOR(MARLON BRANDO).

Catch Marlon Brando in one of his best roles, other than *The Godfather*. Brando's street fighter, Terry Malloy, who takes on his mafia bosses for the sake of truth, justice, and all things fair, is a mesmerizing portrayal of the quintessential rebel. In *On The Waterfront*, Malloy is a former prizefighter who does the dirty work for the mob, simply because his elder brother is a key gang member. But when he falls in love with the sister of one of the mob's victims, he realizes it's time to stand up, speak up and use his fighting skills for a noble cause. He laments before his brother that he could have been a contender for a good and ethical life, if only he had been given a chance. *On The Waterfront* is an evergreen drama on the conflict between good and evil.

## ▶ ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

DRAMA | 1975 | ★★★★

Randle Patrick McMurphy (Jack Nicholson) is a small-time conman who tries to escape a short prison term by faking

**DIRECTION:**
MILOS FORMAN
**CAST:**
JACK NICHOLSON, LOUISE FLETCHER
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR(JACK NICHOLSON).

insanity because he believes a stint in the mental asylum will be easier. But McMurphy finds the asylum to be a living hell, run by a dictatorial nurse (Louise Fletcher) who drugs the inmates into subservience. It doesn't take long for our anti-hero to lead a rebellion by a ragtag army of mentally challenged inmates.Nicholson's portrayal of the angry, rebellious McMurphy made the anti-hero almost legendary in celluloid history. Significantly, the film remains topical for all times since the revolt in the asylum by the so-called weak and non-heroic people illustrates the essential freedom of human spirit and its war against authoritarianism.

## ▶ PLATOON

ACTION | 1986 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
OLIVER STONE
**CAST:**
TOM BERENGER, WILLEM DAFOE, CHARLIE SHEEN
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

In *Platoon*, witness the horrors of war in Vietnam through the eyes of young recruit Chris Taylor (Charlie Sheen) who confides his fears, insecurities and misgivings in letters to his grandmother. An innocent, optimistic, young American patriot, Taylor joins the war as his duty. But as violence and indignities begin to pile up, the inevitable truth dawns on him. War is bad, and can never be justified, even as the combat zone is a place where nobody belongs. In this no-holds-barred indictment of state-sponsored violence, Oliver Stone reportedly recounts his experiences as a war veteran in Vietnam.

## ▶ PRETTY WOMAN

ROMANCE | 1990 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GARY MARSHALL
**CAST:**
RICHARD GERE, JULIA ROBERTS

An upmarket businessman (Richard Gere) needs an escort for his social-dos. He finds Julia Roberts, takes her to his hotel room, and strikes a business deal with her so that she stays with him for a few days and accompanies him around. Nothing wrong with that except that he falls in love with her, and ends up clambering atop her fire escape, bringing the fairy tale to a fitting finale. *Pretty Woman*'s attraction lies in the beautiful people who play the lead roles. Richard Gere and Julia Roberts share a crackling chemistry in this modern-day Cinderella tale, which revisits romance in its old-fashioned innocence, where you have a hooker using dental floss and keeping lip locks out of her daily business agenda. Can't get more schmaltzy than this!

## ▶ PSYCHO

HORROR | 1960 | ★★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ALFRED HITCHCOCK
**CAST:**
ANTHONY PERKINS, JANET LEIGH

The Bates Motel has ended up as one of the scariest places in cinema. It's a lonely, desolate motel in the middle of nowhere where a young fugitive, Marion Crane (Janet Leigh), strikes a rapport with the dysfunctional owner, Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins), only to end up completely messed up, like the stuffed

birds that adorn the spooky place. Shot in black and white, *Psycho* is undoubtedly Hitchcock's best film that proves that the simplest films are at times the most unforgettable. Norman Bates, with his grandmother fixation, still towers as Hollywood's greatest slasher who makes life miserable for pretty young things.

## ▶ PULP FICTION

ACTION | 1994 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
QUENTIN TARANTINO
**CAST:**
JOHN TRAVOLTA, UMA THURMAN, BRUCE WILLIS, SAMUEL L. JACKSON
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST WRITING.

Historically, *Pulp Fiction* is a genre-defining film in Hollywood. Quentin Tarantino introduced a whole new idiom of filmmaking with *Reservoir Dogs*, a hard-hitting insight on crime and criminals who were depicted minus all moral deliberations. However, *Reservoir Dogs* was still raw. The idiom found a more refined enunciation in *Pulp Fiction*, where the drama of illicit romance, revenge, rebellion and violence is shown from the point of view of the anti-hero. Even the narrative is a breakthrough as it follows four protagonists in four different stories that head towards a single climax. The Mob boss (Ving Rhames) tries to maintain his stranglehold on the underworld, while his foot soldiers play their nasty games. John Travolta has a naughty fling with his flirtatious girl, Uma Thurman, while Bruce Willis tries to walk out on him. In between, there's the Bible-reciting hit man, Samuel L. Jackson, and the clinical killer, Harvey Keitel, unleashing mayhem when least expected. This one's a zany, post-modern look at anti-heroics.

## ▶ RAGING BULL

DRAMA | 1980 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN SCORSESE
**CAST:**
ROBERT DE NIRO, CATHY MORIARTY, JOE PESCI
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR(ROBERT DE NIRO).

Martin Scorsese's biopic on Jake LaMotta, a middleweight prizefighter, who stepped out from the Bronx to make it big in the boxing ring in the 1940s, expertly lays bare the soul of the boxer. LaMotta (Robert De Niro) is an archetypal underdog who lives by brute force and has no time for sensitivity in his blood-splattered life. Love, for him, is a painful force that gets marred by jealousy, insecurities, self-doubt and abuse. He falls in love with a brazen teenager (Cathy Moriarty) whom he spots in a swimming pool. Yet, despite marrying her, he ends up in an emotionally battered relationship with her. Rated as one of Scorsese's best films, *Raging Bull* has poignancy behind the brute force: outward violence incipiently seeps into a man's insides and causes him to self-destruct. Robert De Niro, in the lead role, is all guts and fury, especially in the hard-hitting boxing sequences.

## ▶ RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

ACTION | 1981 | ★★★★

The fedora-wearing American archeologist, Indiana Jones, with his trigger-happy ways and his nerves of steel remains one of

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
HARRISON FORD, KAREN ALLEN, PAUL FREEMAN
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

the most colourful adventurers of all times. He captured the adventure buff's imagination long before Captain Jack Sparrow (*Pirates Of The Caribbean*) sailed the high seas and Lara Croft slipped into the boots of the tomb raider. In his debut film, Steven Spielberg's hero (Harrison Ford) is caught in a race against time to find the rare artefact, the Ark of the Covenant (the golden casket where ancient Hebrews hid the Ten Commandments), before the infamous Nazis beat him in a death-defying mission. Death defying, did we say? Action never got more hectic as edge-of-the-seat SFX bombards the big screen with monstrous creepy-crawlies, incendiary bombs, booby-trapped tombs and desert chases, brawls in Nepal, bouts with drunken Sherpas and a former girlfriend in Tibet, make Indy the ultimate globe-trotting hero. Even today, The Indy Jones series remain one of celluloid's most eyeball popping pulp fiction stories.

## ▶ RAIN MAN

DRAMA | 1988 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BARRY LEVINSON
CAST:
DUSTIN HOFFMAN, TOM CRUISE
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (DUSTIN HOFFMAN), BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE.

Charlie (Tom Cruise) is the quintessential yuppie who couldn't care less about people or purpose unless he saw some profit in it for himself. When his moneyed father dies, leaving him a pittance, he sets out to find his long lost brother, Raymond (Dustin Hoffman), who is a beneficiary of the bulk of his father's wealth. Charlie finds the autistic Raymond in an institution. He immediately tries to gain custody of his brother so that he could take his millions. But somewhere down their travels – and travails – the two brothers bond and become family. Dustin Hoffman's amazing portrayal of the figure-crunching Raymond makes the autistic savant an unforgettable hero.

## ▶ REAR WINDOW

HORROR | 1954 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ALFRED HITCHCOCK
CAST:
JAMES STEWART, GENE KELLY

In *Rear Window*, a bored photographer, recuperating on a wheelchair after breaking his leg, spends his time spying through his binoculars on his neighbours. These include a scantily clad ballerina, a middle-aged woman scurrying to imaginary dates, a couple that sleeps on the fire escape, a lonely songwriter and a harried salesman tormented by his hectoring, invalid wife. Quite ordinary, all this voyeurism, until a scream pierces the stillness of the night and the rear window opens up into a world of suspected murder and foul play. Riveting Hitchcock fare.

## ▶ ROCKY

ACTION | 1976 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN AVILDSEN

The current heavyweight champion, Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers), wants to fight an underdog to create boxing news. It's time for Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone), a small-time

CAST:
SYLVESTER STALLONE, TALIA SHIRE
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

boxer, to rise from the dust and punch his way to boxing glory. Balboa's nerve-wracking training regime on the streets of Philadelphia, his metamorphosis into a lean, mean fighting machine, his tenderness towards shy Ms Shire and his hard-hitting knockout punches make for a sizzling movie. *Rocky* ended up creating an award-winning franchise that has already seen a blitzkrieg of six feisty films.

## ▶ ROMEO AND JULIET

ROMANCE | 1996 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BAZ LUHRMANN
CAST:
LEONARDO DICAPRIO, CLAIRE DAINES

Shakespeare becomes pop in this unconventional retelling of the classic tragedy. Set against the scenic backdrop of Verona, Montagues and Capulets become two powerful and feuding corporate dynasties that cannot allow their kids to fall in love. The family feud casts its inimical shadow on the lovers and love ends in death. Forget the familiar storyline: it's the stunning visuals and high-octane drama that make *Romeo And Juliet* spellbinding Shakespearean fare.

## ▶ SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

WAR | 1998 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
TOM HANKS, MATT DAMON, TOM SIZEMORE
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR.

Steven Spielberg wanted to make a war movie where viewers would not just sit back, munch popcorns and watch the mayhem from the ringside. "I wanted the audience in the arena, not sitting off to one side," says Spielberg. "I didn't want to make something that was easy to look away from." And if that was his objective, Spielberg has succeeded. For there can be no looking away from *Saving Private Ryan*: a film that takes you into the battlefield and brings you face-to-face with brutal death. This, as Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks) and his eight-men company try to bring back Private Ryan from the battlefield to his mourning mother who has lost the rest of her three sons in World War II. While Spielberg's hand-held cameras literally thrust the viewer into the maelstrom, his superb editing creates a perfect mosaic of terror. For, the combat sequences are intensely moving and fanatically detailed. We see soldiers from belly level, losing life and limbs and literally bleeding to death.

## ▶ SCARFACE

CRIME | 1983 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BRIAN DE PALMA
CAST:
AL PACINO, MICHELLE PFEIFFER, ROBERT LOGGIA

If there's anybody who can outdo Al Pacino's Michael Corleone (*The Godfather*), it is Pacino himself. His portrayal of the unforgettable gangster, Tony Montana, in *Scarface* is again the stuff anti-heroes are made of. A Cuban immigrant, Montana, lands in Florida and chases the American dream even if it means killing people for a Green Card and smuggling coke for a fortune. A brash, adventurous and irreverent hoodlum, Montana rises to power by taking over the drug empire – and

the bored wife (Michelle Pfeiffer) – of his boss (Robert Loggia). But once he's broken all rules and scaled unparalleled heights in the violent world of crime, he can only go downhill. A high-octane moral play, *Scarface* perfectly showcases Pacino's histrionics.

## ▶ SCENT OF A WOMAN

DRAMA | 1992 | ★★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN BREST
**CAST:**
AL PACINO,
CHRIS O' DONNELL
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (AL PACINO).

A morality fable that highlights the importance of integrity and loyalty in an individual's life, *Scent Of A Woman* is unforgettable Al Pacino pizzazz. As the blind and bitter Colonel Frank Slade (Al Pacino) who sets out on his last journey to New York with Charlie Sims (Chris O'Donnell), his hired help from the neighbouring high school, Pacino puts in a power-packed performance. One that is more loaded than his gun that threatens to go off, whenever the colonel thinks its curtains for him. From a cynical loner, he graduates into a protective father figure to the troubled youth. It's an engaging bond between two mismatched people – a young student and an over-the-hill grouch – where each brings out the best in the other.

## ▶ SCHINDLER'S LIST

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:**
LIAM NEESON,
BEN KINGSLEY,
RALPH FIENNES
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

Out of the innumerable films on the Holocaust, *Schindler's List* stands out as the most powerful documentation of this devastating tragedy. The film traces the efforts of a single man, Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), who heeds his conscience, takes positive steps, and alters the course of history. He saves 1,100 Jews from Hitler's gas chambers and helps them flee from the horrors of World War II. And what's more striking is that Schindler isn't the nicest guy around. An unabashed profiteer, he initially tries to use Jews as wage slaves in his factory in Poland. But as atrocities against Jews increase with stunning regularity, Schindler is deeply touched and changes tack. He bribes officials and befriends crucial Nazis to get a greater number of Jews out of concentration camps into his factory, which ultimately becomes a haven for endangered Jews. With the horror and violence shot in stark black and white and riveting performances by the three main players – Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley and Ralph Fiennes – the film brought Spielberg his first Oscar for Best Director.

## ▶ THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION

CRIME | 1994 | ★★★★

Andy Dufresene (Tim Robbins), vice-president of a bank, is sent to Shawshank Prison to serve a double life sentence after being charged with murdering his wife and her lover. Andy insists he is innocent, but no one believes him. His ordeal is shown

DIRECTION:
FRANK DARABONT
CAST:
TIM ROBBINS,
MORGAN FREEMAN

through the eyes of another prisoner, Red (Morgan Freeman), who marvels at the new inmate's survival tactics. After being subjected to lashings, sexual abuse and other horrors in prison, Andy finds a way to gain respectability in captivity. Using his banker's experience to double up as financial adviser to other inmates, he hopes life will take a turn for the better. But though redemption doesn't come easy, this Stephen King potboiler weaves a warm and humanistic parable about friendship, loyalty and self-esteem.

## ▶ THE SHINING

HORROR | 1980 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STANLEY KUBRICK
CAST:
JACK NICHOLSON,
SHELLEY DUVALL

In *The Shining*, Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) is a reformed alcoholic child abuser who wants to set his life completely straight. So, he moves with his wife (Shelley Duvall) and son to a desolate hotel that has been closed for the winter, to work as a caretaker during the deep freeze. Was it the isolation, the winter chill or ghosts from the hotel's murky past – a former caretaker had killed his family and committed suicide – but Jack's reformation plans go completely awry. He becomes Johnny, the manic killer, who doesn't want to rest until he can finish off his family. Matters get even more nerve-wracking because this is the archetypal dysfunctional family where a psychic son speaks to an imaginary friend who lives inside his mouth and envisions the horrific past of the hotel. *The Shining*, based on Stephen King's pulp thriller, is positively bone chilling and showcases Nicholson at his devilish best.

## ▶ THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

THRILLER | 1991 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JONATHAN DEMME
CAST:
ANTHONY HOPKINS,
JODIE FOSTER
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR, BEST ACTRESS.

*The Silence Of The Lambs* is the sort of film that makes you believe in the impossible. It makes you believe that a cannibal could be a hero and a gentleman and could even win your admiration despite sending a chill down your spine. It isn't the inexperienced FBI cadet, Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster), who becomes morally ambivalent towards the notorious Dr. Hannibal Lector (Anthony Hopkins) as she seeks his help while trying to nab another psychopath. Anthony Hopkins' intense portrayal of the character transforms Hannibal the Cannibal into such a connoisseur-cum-intellectual that even the viewer gets swept away by his charisma. Gaze into the deep, dark recesses of Hannibal's twisted soul and find out what psychopaths are made of. Horror never remained the same after this film.

## ▶ SINGIN' IN THE RAIN

ROMANCE | 1952 | ★★★★

A delightful satire on Hollywood's transition to the talkies era, *Singin' In The Rain* is unanimously rated as one of the finest

**DIRECTION:**
GENE KELLY, STANLEY DONEN
**CAST:**
GENE KELLY, DEBBIE REYNOLDS, JEAN HAGEN

musicals in Hollywood. With 12 songs and some superbly choreographed dances, especially Gene Kelly's signature style as he celebrates love, swinging from a lamp post in the rain, the film is pure entertainment that simply never ages. It's the simplicity of the film – an uncluttered love story between a Broadway star (Gene Kelly) and a backroom extra (Debbie Reynolds) who dubs for the squawky-voiced heroine (Jean Hagen) – and the witticisms of the screenplay that make this vintage fare so delectable.

## ▶ THE SIXTH SENSE

THRILLER | 1999 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
M. NIGHT SHYAMALAN
**CAST:**
BRUCE WILLIS, HALEY JOEL OSMENT, TONI COLLETTE

*The Sixth Sense* is superb cinema. Relentlessly playing a cat and mouse game with the viewer, it challenges him to keep a step ahead of the filmmaker. Cole Sear, an eight-year-old, desperately tries to fit into the mould of the happy-go-lucky kid. He fails. Simply because Cole sees ghosts — people who have died untimely brutal deaths. People who enter his bedroom, bathroom, living room, with gaping holes in their heads, burns on their faces, bile frothing out, gasping for help. Ostracised by his friends, alienated from his mother, Cole can only seek refuge in the reassuring presence of Dr. Malcolm Crowe, a child psychologist, who has an unnerving history of success and failure behind him. The distressed duo do their best to lift each other from their private hell and end up creating a heartwarming picture of love and compassion. But the highpoints of *The Sixth Sense* are its chilling moments.

## ▶ SOME LIKE IT HOT

COMEDY | 1959 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
BILLY WILDER
**CAST:**
MARILYN MONROE, TONY CURTIS, JACK LEMMON

Bring out the laughs, loud and clear. *Some Like It Hot* is one of Hollywood's evergreen comedies, with Marilyn Monroe playing Sugar, the perfect blonde bimbette. Now, Sugar's a fun-loving, gin-drinking musician who gets excited about saxophone players and men with glasses. She does manage to find the love of her life (Tony Curtis), only he happens to be in a fix. He, along with his friend (Jack Lemmon), has to live in disguise as a member of an all-girl's band. Having witnessed a mob murder, the duo is fleeing from bloodthirsty gangsters. They find refuge in the female band, until love strikes. Curtis must stop masquerading as a fake millionaire before his Sugar baby, while Lemmon must fob off the hare-brained millionaire who finds his female avatar delectable. Great stuff!

## ▶ THE SOUND OF MUSIC

DRAMA | 1965 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT WISE

A young, undisciplined novitiate is pulled out from a convent where she is waiting to become a nun and sent as a governess

CAST:
JULIE ANDREWS, CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

to look after Captain Von Trapp's seven children. The Naval Officer, a widower, runs his home with military precision. But only till firebrand Maria rewrites all rules in his home and ushers in music, laughter and love into his austere household. This, even as the family tries to flee the Nazis and the impending war clouds. With memorable songs like *Do-Re-Mi* and *Edelweiss*, *The Sound Of Music* is undoubtedly the most loved family classic down the ages.

## ▶ SPIDER-MAN

ACTION | 2002 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
SAM RAIMI
CAST:
TOBEY MAGUIRE, KIRSTEN DUNST, WILLEM DAFOE

A nerdy, loner, high school youth is bitten on a school trip by a genetically modified spider and gets transformed into Spider-Man, a masked crusader, who can swing across the cityscape and settle scores with baddies who threaten peace and justice. The Marvel Comics character comes to life in this computer-generated marvel, with Tobey Maguire dexterously slipping into Spidey's suit, even as he excels in the pulverized alter ego, Peter Parker. In *Spider-Man*, Spidey meets his match in the Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), a billionaire scientist, who covets a US military project of genetically enhanced soldiers and transforms himself into one, even before the government gives him the green signal. The CGI sequences are memorable, but more than the flying and crawling, Spidey's first upside-down kiss with journalist Mary Jane Watson (Kirsten Dunst) sticks to the memory.

## ▶ STAR WARS: A NEW HOPE

SCI-FI | 1977 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
GEORGE LUCAS
CAST:
MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER, ALEC GUINNESS
AWARDS:
SIX OSCARS.

Science fiction acquired a cult status akin to works of Shakespeare with George Lucas' operatic fairy tale about a hero who sets out to rescue a princess in outer space. Set against an inter-galactic war where the heroes of the Rebel Alliance are fighting against the evil Empire headed by a megalomaniac ruler (Peter Cushing) and his deadly lieutenant Darth Vader, *Star Wars* focuses on the adventures of Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and his comrades, brave knight Obi Wan Kenobi (Alec Guinness) and daredevil mercenary Hans Solo (Harrison Ford). The trio is on a death-defying mission to set free Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) from the clutches of the Empire and must combat the superhuman and supremely malevolent Darth Vader. The film, a milestone in Hollywood, gave birth to a powerful franchise which saw Lucas carrying forth the *Star Wars* saga through six films which included *The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Return of the Jedi*. *Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace*, *Star Wars: Episode II – The Attack of the Clones* and *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith*. The ageless appeal of the *Star Wars*' saga lies more in the characters and special effects than in the story.

## ▶ SUNSET BOULEVARD

DRAMA | 1950 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
BILLY WILDER
**CAST:**
GLORIA SWANSON, WILLIAM HOLDEN, ERIC VON STROHEIM
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS.

In *Sunset Boulevard*, Billy Wilder expertly lifts the veil off Hollywood. And he does it with no sentimentality: just brutal honesty. He captures the tragic, almost embarrassing, attempts of a fading silent movies' star (Gloria Swanson) to cling onto stardom as the talkies take over and her youth begins to fade. Norma Desmond is the forgotten star of yesteryears who lives with her memories – and her faithful butler Max (Eric von Stroheim) – in a mothballed mansion, dreaming of a comeback with Hollywood's greatest director, Cecil B. DeMille. She hires the services of struggling journalist Joe Gillis (William Holden) to write a script for her and makes him a witness to her failing grandeur and anguished desperation. *Sunset Boulevard* is a disturbing no-holds-barred picture of the heartless world of glamour that makes and breaks stars with unflinching ruthlessness.

## ▶ SUPERMAN

ACTION | 1978 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
RICHARD DONNER
**CAST:**
CHRISTOPHER REEVES, MARLON BRANDO, GENE HACKMAN, MARGOT KIDDER

One of the best celluloid adaptations of a comic book, *Superman* soars due to the authentic feel given to the central character by Christopher Reeves. He fits snugly into the role of the fabled orphan from Planet Krypton. He travels through time and space to save Planet Earth from power-hungry megalomaniac Lex Luthor (Gene Hackman) in the traditional fight of good against evil. Except, in *Superman*, this literally acquires a larger-than-life form when low-key reporter Clark Kent metamorphoses into the man of steel who flies across New York City, saving damsels – and the world—in distress. In the first adventure, Superman must destroy evil Luthor's plan to build a new West Coast, by stockpiling hijacked nuclear missiles. Irreversibly changing the appeal of the hero, *Superman* also changed the face of romance. After *Superman*, romance did not merely mean a prosaic date, but involved some night gliding across starry space, this being Superman's normal tryst with spunky journo Lois Lane (Margot Kidder).

## ▶ TAXI DRIVER

DRAMA | 1976 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN SCORSESE
**CAST:**
ROBERT DE NIRO, JODIE FOSTER, HARVEY KEITEL

Enter the hell that exists within the mind and soul of a quintessential American in combat with an unjust system. A Vietnam War veteran, Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro), returns home without having quelled the war within. He is a bundle of simmering rage that feeds and grows on the urban degradation of New York City, a concrete jungle that is even more dangerous than the Viet Cong-infested jungles of Vietnam. The moral degradation and incipient violence of city life turn Travis into a sociopath who roams the urban underbelly as the cuckoo

cabbie man, hell-bent on clearing the scum – weirdoes, pimps, prostitutes — off the cityscape. It's a startling, disturbing picture of social disarray, with De Niro redefining the angst of a socially dysfunctional citizen who has been transformed into a rage machine. Catch Jodie Foster playing a 12-year-old prostitute with piquant charm.

## ▶ TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

DRAMA | 1983 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JAMES L. BROOKS
CAST:
SHIRLEY MACLAINE, DEBRA WINGER, JACK NICHOLSON
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTRESS.

A heartwarming *dekko* on familial love, *Terms Of Endearment* builds upon a mother-daughter relationship that, with the passage of time, moves from chaos to equilibrium. Shirley MacLaine, an arrogant, uptight widow, hasn't had a boyfriend since her husband died. She grows sceptical of love and is suspicious of her daughter's (Debra Winger) attempts to settle down and start a family with an ordinary literature teacher (Jeff Daniels). But her views begin to subtly change when she discovers her "uncivilized" neighbour, the hard-living, former astronaut (Jack Nicholson) isn't actually so bad. It's a sentimental, often comic, portrayal of the attempts of a dysfunctional mother and daughter to find equilibrium in love and life. Add to this Jack Nicholson's dramatic edginess and you have a real family film at hand: one, where the highs come along with the lows.

## ▶ TITANIC

ROMANCE | 1997 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JAMES CAMERON
CAST:
LEONARDO DICAPRIO, KATE WINSLET
AWARDS: ELEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

It's 194-minutes long and cost $200 million to make. And it won 11 Oscars. But more than the stunning figures, it is the overwhelming sentimentality of *Titanic* that classifies it as an epical romance. The love story between commoner Jack Dawson and aristocratic Rose Dewitt Bukater, set against the ornate yet tragic backdrop of the sinking luxury liner, sends out all the right signals. It talks of a love that is passionate, permanent, soul stirring, death defying and powerful enough to break all barriers of class and destiny. And the fact that James Cameron has managed to blend steamy romance with a mind-blowing depiction of disaster makes the film even more spectacular. Watching Titanic sink, with all the attendant creaks and cracks, is truly a milestone moment in movie lore.

## ▶ TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

DRAMA | 1962 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROBERT MULLIGAN
CAST:
GREGORY PECK, MARY BADHAM

Based on Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, the film has been rated among the top 50 by the American Film Institute, even as Atticus Finch (Gregory Peck), the Alabama lawyer who fought against racial prejudice in the pre-Civil Rights US, is viewed as one of the most popular

AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (GREGORY PECK).

fictional characters in Hollywood. Finch is the archetypal hero who defends a black American accused of rape in a racially charged country. But more than this, the single father fights to bring up his two children as upright, humane individuals, minus all prejudices. *To Kill A Mockingbird* is great cinema that upholds great principles.

## ▶ UNFORGIVEN

ACTION | 1992 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
CLINT EASTWOOD
CAST:
CLINT EASTWOOD, MORGAN FREEMAN, GENE HACKMAN
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

The quintessential cowboy, who rode off into the sunset and hung up his boots, returns in the *Unforgiven* when everyone thought the western was dead and gone. Clint Eastwood returns to the western genre again in this movie to win critical and commercial acclaim. *Unforgiven* proves to be the lone ranger's second coming. Set in the 1800s, the film sees the resurrection of William Munny (Clint Eastwood), a deadly, violent and bloodthirsty killer, for one last case. Munny has been reformed by his wife and is leading an anonymous life as a farmer with two kids, when he is offered a bounty to nab two outlaws. To accomplish his mission, he teams up with his old partner, Morgan Freeman, and a young upstart. It's a moody, introspective return to the cult of gore, with the notorious sheriff (Gene Hackman) laying the bait.

## ▶ THE UNTOUCHABLES

DRAMA | 1987 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BRIAN DE PALMA
CAST:
KEVIN COSTNER, ROBERT DE NIRO, SEAN CONNERY, ANDY GARCIA
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (SEAN CONNERY).

Set against the Prohibition years in Chicago, *The Untouchables* is a classic crime thriller that has some of the best action set pieces. This includes a recreation of cult film *Battleship Potemkin*'s legendary Odessa Steps sequence, revisited as a shoot-out on the steps of Chicago Central Station. Eliott Ness (Kevin Costner) is a perfect cop who builds a powerful team to arrest flamboyant mafia boss Al Capone (Robert De Niro) who has a stranglehold on the entire law and order machinery. It takes a bunch of young rookie cops and a veteran Irish cynic (Sean Connery), immune to bribes and allurements, to bring the arrogant gangster on his knees. The cops and robbers game never got better.

## ▶ WALL STREET

DRAMA | 1986 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
OLIVER STONE
CAST:
MICHAEL DOUGLAS, CHARLIE SHEEN, DARYL HANNAH

In *Wall Street*, Oliver Stone dissects the age of avarice – and advancement – in the US economy with competence and drive. It is the 1980s, just a few years before the 1987 stock market crash, when Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas), a ruthless and successful stockbroker, declares that greed is good: this being the mantra of neo-capitalist economic growth the world over. Now Gekko, a true representative of the I-Me-Myself

AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (MICHAEL DOUGLAS)

generation, is the archetypal corporate honcho who believes unfair practices are fair game in big business. He finds an able learner in ambitious rookie Bud Fox (Charlie Sheen) who joins in the game of corporate wheeling-dealing. But unlike the teacher, the student knows when to draw the line and uses lessons learnt in a thrilling game of vengeance against his business guru. With a career-defining role for Michael Douglas, *Wall Street* is a stirring critique of corporate greed.

## ▶ WEST SIDE STORY

ROMANCE | 1961 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROBERT WISE, JEROME ROBBINS
CAST:
NATALIE WOOD, RICHARD BEYMER
AWARDS:
TEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

This film adaptation of the immensely popular Broadway musical, *West Side Story*, has been hailed as one of the best Hollywood musicals, almost measuring up to the grandeur of *Singin'In The Rain*. Thematically, it is a revised version of the Romeo and Juliet story, setting the plot against gang rivalries – Puerto Ricans versus Americans – in the upper West Side of Manhattan. The film's highpoints are the enthralling music by Leonard Bernstein and the mesmerizing choreography by Jerome Robbins. Together, they transform the tragic love story into a colourful spectacle.

## ▶ WHEN HARRY MET SALLY

ROMANCE | 1989 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROB REINER
CAST:
BILLY CRYSTAL, MEG RYAN

A woman in a restaurant points towards a convulsing Sally (Meg Ryan) and tells her harried waiter: "I'll have what she's having." So, what was Sally having? A fake orgasm to show her coffee partner, Harry (Billy Crystal), how commonplace sex could be. Not surprisingly, this becomes the signature scenes of one of Hollywood's most wacky romantic comedies where love happens, but not in a fairy tale form. *When Harry Met Sally* is a funny, salty gender-bender where it takes 12 long years for Harry and Sally to realize they actually love each other, even though they begin their relationship as an experiment in man-woman bonding. They want to prove that men and women can be friends, with sex being a non-issue in this strictly platonic bond. Naturally, they are wrong and the experiment goes awry, but not before the two have cooked up a delectable storm of emotions on screen.

## ▶ THE WILD BUNCH

ACTION | 1969 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
SAM PECKINPAH
**CAST:**
WILLIAM HOLDEN, ERNEST BORGNINE

It's 1913: almost the end of the Wild West days. But a bunch of ageing cowboys is not ready to retire yet, even though their last bounty-hunting mission — the hold-up of a railroad's payroll — ends in dismal failure. In *The Wild Bunch*, Pike Bishop and his group of crooked men decide to go down fighting because the only life they know is how to live on the wild side. In the outlaw's code of honour, laws are meant to be broken, money is meant to be looted and rivals are meant to be exterminated. The only values to be upheld in this morally amorphous world are friendship and loyalty because as the gang's leader Bishop says: "When you side with a man, you stay with him. And if you can't do that, you're like some animal; you're finished." With explosive action and oversized violence, this one is a towering portrayal of the anti-hero.

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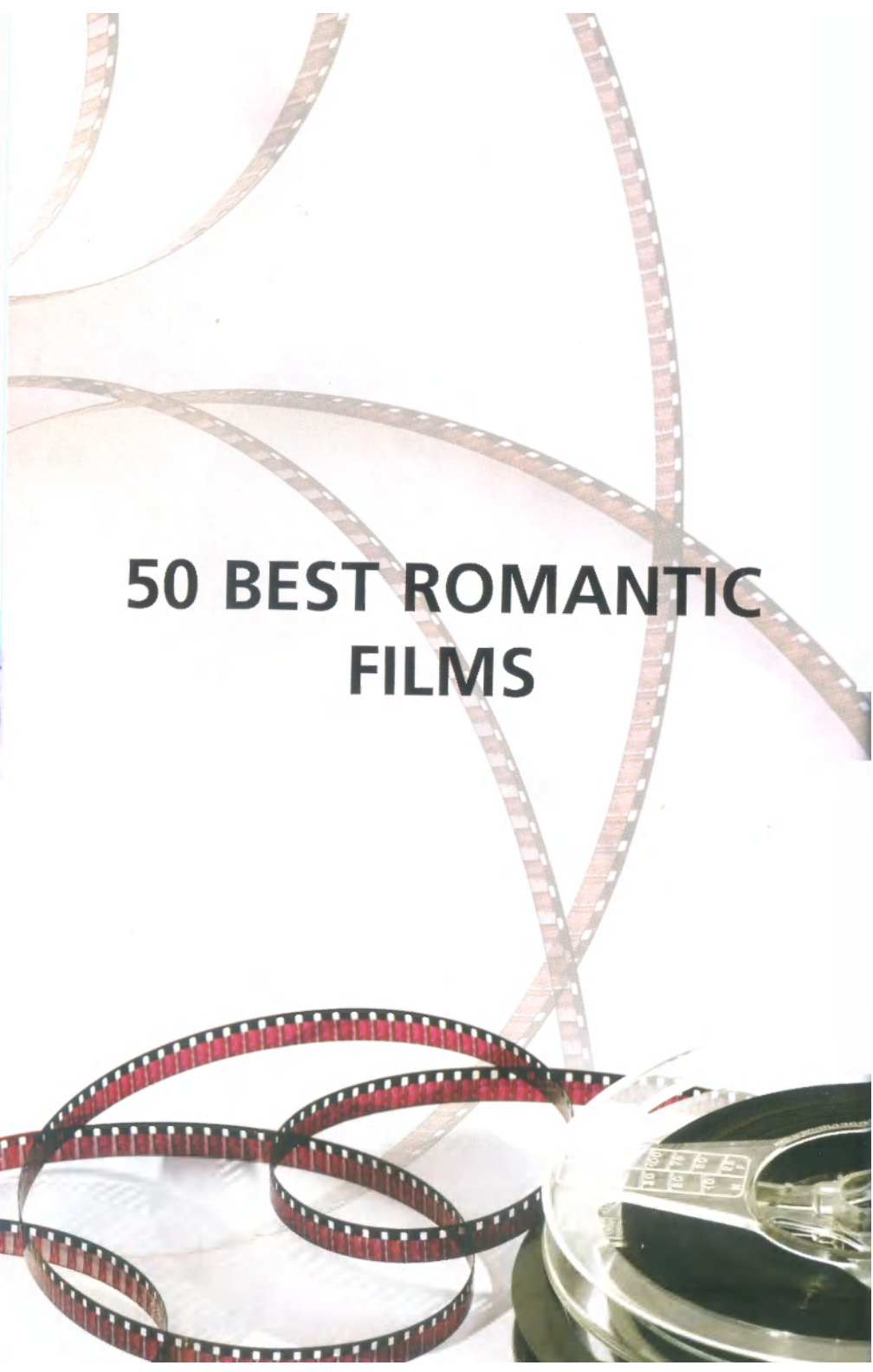
# 50 BEST ROMANTIC FILMS



## ▶ A BEAUTIFUL MIND

ROMANCE | 2001 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
RON HOWARD
**CAST:**
RUSSELL CROWE, JENNIFER CONNELLY
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

His first-grade teacher told him he was born with two-helpings of a brain and a half-helping of heart. But John Forbes Nash Jr. (Russell Crowe) does manage to live an amazing life where his mind and heart had an equal interplay. And the woman who imbues heart into his life is his student-turned-wife, Sylvia Nash (Jennifer Connelly), who stands by him through all the ups and downs in life. She helps him hang onto his sanity, despite bouts of schizophrenia and consequent alienation. Based on the biography of famous mathematician John Forbes Nash, written by his wife, Sylvia Nash, *A Beautiful Mind* is a warm and stirring testament of a bond that survives all odd.

## ▶ ADDICTED TO LOVE

ROMANCE | 1997 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GRIFFIN DUNNE
**CAST:**
MEG RYAN, MATTHEW BRODERICK, KELLY PRESTON

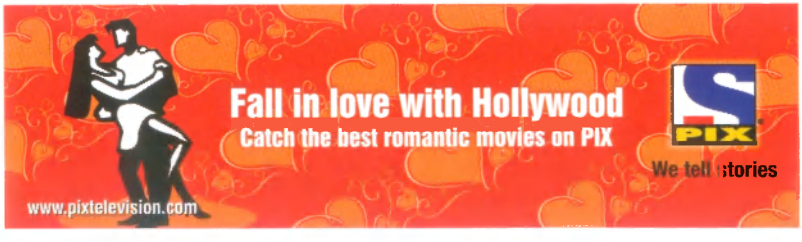
In *Addicted To Love*, Sam (Matthew Broderick) loses his love (Kelly Preston) to a French chef (Tcheky Karvo). Maggie (Meg Ryan) loses her dream man (the French chef) to a small-town girl (Kelly Preston) who has just moved into Big Apple in search of the big thrill. Together, Broderick and Ryan plot to get rid of the intruding 'Other' from their lives, only to end up falling in love with each other... It's sweet like a Popsicle, with star gazing Broderick bonding perfectly with motorcycle-borne Ryan.

## ▶ AGE OF INNOCENCE

ROMANCE | 1993 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN SCORSESE
**CAST:**
DANIEL DAY - LEWIS, MICHELLE PFEIFFER, WINONA RYDER
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

Martin Scorsese trapezes into unfamiliar territory: from the guts and glory of *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull* to the cloistered era of Victorian repression, where emotions were underplayed and their expression forbidden. And Scorsese displays his craftsmanship in this strange new world too. In *Age Of Innocence*, he sculpts a poignant love story that captures every subtle detail of life in the 19th-century where people married for convenience rather than love, because love was considered vulgar and class inviolate. Hence, the alliance of Newland Archer (Daniel Day-Lewis) with his pretty betrothed, May Welland (Winona Ryder), who is engaged to him without



engaging his mind. But decorum and decency are threatened when the gentleman falls desperately in love with Countess Ellen Olenska (Michelle Pfeiffer), May's freethinking, consummately wild cousin. She has not only married a Polish Count but has also divorced him and enjoys New York's high living as a questionable single woman. Scorsese excels in this exquisite period drama about a tormented love triangle.

## ▶ THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

ROMANCE | 1995 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ROB REINER
**CAST:**
MICHAEL DOUGLAS, ANNETTE BENNING

Can the American President fall in love while in office, without creating a storm in the White House? He can, but only after weathering an emotional and political storm, which sees his popularity rating plummeting, his re-election almost ending up in dire straits and his trapeze act between lover boy and America's Chief Executive almost sending him in a tizzy. But remember, it's Michael Douglas. In *The American President*, he not only slips into the First Citizen's shoes with pizzazz but also manages to display his soft core with sensitivity. It's quite gushy and gooey to watch the Prez romance the fiery lobbyist (Annette Benning) who begins by questioning the official apathy towards environmental issues and ends up like molten lava in the Presidential suite. It's fireworks, all the way.

## ▶ AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER

ROMANCE | 1957 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
LEO MCCAREY
**CAST:**
CARY GRANT, DEBORAH KERR

In *An Affair To Remember*, Nicky Ferrante (Cary Grant) has never worked a day in his life. He never needed to. Not until the rich playboy meets Terry McKay (Deborah Kerr), a nightclub singer, on a ship while cruising from the French Riviera to New York. The duo sing to each other and share a clandestine kiss, only to realize that they are madly in love despite being betrothed to another. But undying love can never be impetuous, so the lovers decide to meet six months later, atop Empire Street Building, the nearest place to heaven in New York. Till then, Nicky has to prove that he can support his love by his labour so he starts painting. D-Day approaches and the two head towards their destination when tragedy strikes. Do they live happily ever after? Why not, after all, unions and reunions are fair in love.

## ▶ AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN

ROMANCE | 1982 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
TAYLOR HACKFORD
**CAST:**
RICHARD GERE, DEBRA WINGER

Can a man and a woman find love and end up happily-ever-after in 13 weeks? That's what Zack Mayo (Richard Gere) and Paula Pokrifki (Debra Winger) must find out in this elegant take on the trajectory of romance, set against a Naval Aviation Officer Training School in Washington. Gere, an officer undergoing training, like other cadets meets a local girl at the

AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS.

Regimental Ball. It is the tradition of the local girls to hitch themselves with suitable boys, any which way, and end up as officers' wives. But is this officer-in-the-making ready for commitment; and is this self-respecting girl willing to play the courtship game with guile and machinations? Watch how love grows...from a flippant first date to a till-death-do-us-part partnership.

## ▶ ANNIE HALL

DRAMA | 1977 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: WOODY ALLEN | CAST: WOODY ALLEN, DIANE KEATON

Review: Page: 10

## ▶ AS GOOD AS IT GETS

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JAMES L. BROOKS | CAST: JACK NICHOLSON, HELEN HUNT, GREG KINNEAR

Review: Page: 10

## ▶ THE BLUE LAGOON

ROMANCE | 1980 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
RANDALL KLEISER
CAST:
BROOKE SHIELDS,
CHRISTOPHER ATKINS

Brooke Shields and Christopher Atkins are marooned on an idyllic island as kids and grow up in Adam and Eve style. Completely untutored and with no intrusion from the outside world, the two only have each other to learn from. End result? *The Blue Lagoon* is a visually stunning and adrenalin-pumping voyage of discovery as the two romp from childhood to adolescence and, finally, overblown youth. What is essentially a biology lesson for the protagonists ends up as a no-holds-barred coupling of two beautiful people, with Brooke Shields re-defining the teen heroine with her scintillating show of skin and talent.

## ▶ BONNIE AND CLYDE

THRILLER | 1967 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ARTHUR PENN | CAST: WARREN BEATTY, FAYE DUNAWAY

Review: Page: 12

## ▶ BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S

ROMANCE | 1961 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BLAKE EDWARDS
CAST:
AUDREY HEPBURN,
GEORGE PEPPARD

Does a girl marry for love or for money? Not an easy question, specially if you are Holly Golightly (Audrey Hepburn), a downtown girl, who lives on Manhattan's East Side with an orange-striped cat and manages to make a living from dubious sources, including generous tip from friendly men, only when she goes to the powder room. Of course, the question becomes

AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS.

even more vexatious when she meets a kindred spirit in a struggling writer (George Peppard) who moves into the apartment directly above her and depends on the favours of a wealthy woman, obviously, for favours returned. Friends or lovers: it's a question Holly must answer as the two spend quality time and share their similar philosophies over breakfast at Tiffany's. Audrey Hepburn, at her adorable best, creates an unforgettable character as Holly, the *bindaas* big-city girl with a simpleton's soul.

## ▶ BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY

ROMANCE | 1995 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
CLINT EASTWOOD
CAST:
CLINT EASTWOOD,
MERYL STREEP

A middle-aged housewife, Francesca Johnson (Meryl Streep), meets a handsome, middle-aged photographer, Robert Kincaid (Clint Eastwood), and brings him home into her kitchen for a cup of tea, one lonely summer when her husband and kids are away on a trip. Tea passes into dinner and dinner into the promise of a delightful romance between two perfectly matched individuals who could have lived happily ever after. But romance remains just a promise, despite the sexual tension and the mental attunement, because Streep doesn't think it is ethical to walk out on a husband and family, even though Eastwood symbolises the exotica she's always dreamed about. *Bridges Of Madison County*, based on Robert James Waller's best-seller book, sparkles because of the Streep-Eastwood chemistry that simply lightens up this old-fashioned love story where tradition towers over passion.

## ▶ CASABLANCA

DRAMA | 1942 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: MICHAEL CURTIZ | CAST: HUMPHREY BOGART, INGRID BERGMAN

Review: Page: 13

## ▶ CITY OF ANGELS

ROMANCE | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BRAD SILBERLING
CAST:
MEG RYAN,
NICHOLAS CAGE

Wim Wenders' classic *Wings Of Desire* is reworked as *City Of Angels* and, surprisingly, it doesn't lose its romantic mysticism despite its all-American flavour. This may be because of its alluring premise: urban jungles are actually cities of angels where they watch over angst-ridden humans. And, sometimes, they even fall in love with them, as the angel Seth (Nicholas Cage) does. The overcoat-clad angel who had come to LA to transport the soul of a heart patient falls for Maggie (Meg Ryan), a young surgeon, who desperately tries to save all her patients and gets distressed even when one of them dies. But Seth isn't satisfied with simply watching over Maggie. He soon realizes that angels too have free will and can forgo their rarefied forms and become human. Are love and its accompanying motives

enough for an angel to shed his form? But isn't Meg Ryan's mystique meant to die for... Magical stuff.

## DIRTY DANCING

ROMANCE | 1987 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
EMILE ARDOLINO
CAST:
JENNIFER GREY,
PATRICK SWAYZE

They call her Baby (Jennifer Grey) because she is the archetypal babe-in-the-woods who seems unable to handle the ways of a harsh world. But it takes just one sultry summer vacation with her affluent family for young Frances Baby Houseman to discover the seamier, sexier side of life with her underprivileged friends. And she discovers love too in the form of her dance teacher (Patrick Swayze) who has his nimble feet firmly planted on the ground, as he sweats his way through the summer, teaching the rich little miss and missus how to dance dirty. Keeping the tempo high in *Dirty Dancing* are loads of foot-tapping dances. This simple film reaffirms the power of love to transcend class barriers.

## ▶ DOCTOR ZHIVAGO

ROMANCE | 1965 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
DAVID LEAN
CAST:
OMAR SHARIF,
JULIE CHRISTIE
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS.

*Somewhere my love, there will be time to sing*...David Lean's adaptation of Boris Pasternak's award-winning novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, introduced the world to Maurice Jerre's landmark love ballad *Lara's Theme*, the resonance of which still rings loud and clear. But that was secondary. Crucially, it sets the note for the tender love story between Doctor Yuri Zhivago (Omar Sharif), the Russian doctor-poet, and Lara Antipova (Julie Christie), the woman he loves and loses through the historic Bolshevik Revolution. Not as epical as David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*, yet *Doctor Zhivago* remains one of the most faithful celluloid adaptations of a literary classic.

## ▶ THE ENGLISH PATIENT

ROMANCE | 1996 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ANTHONY MINGHELLA

It's World War II. A two-seater plane flies precariously across the Egyptian desert and crash-lands. A nurse (Juliette Binoche) looks after the critically burned man, called the English patient (Ralph

CAST:
RALPH FIENNES,
JULIETTE BINOCHE,
KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS
AWARDS:
NINE OSCARS.

Fiennes). And it is while washing his wounds and trying to alleviate his pain that she learns about the patient's tragic love affair that seems to have caused him more anguish than his burns. He is actually a Hungarian Count who had fallen in love with a married English woman (Kristin Scott Thomas) and earned the wrath of her husband (Colin Firth). With adultery, war, treachery and heartbreak: the canvas is more expansive than the unbounded desert which forms the tumultuous backdrop to the adulterous affair. *The English Patient* is a powerful adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's Booker Prize winning classic.

## ▶ ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND

ROMANCE | 2004 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
MICHAEL GONDRY
CAST:
JIM CARREY,
KATE WINSLET
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Science fiction at its quirky best, *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind* boasts of something else. It boasts of Jim Carrey donning a serious face and making an impact that almost equals the zany *Mask*. But what is more engaging is the premise of the film: can true love be erased, even if all its vestiges are wiped out? The free-spirited and extrovert Clementine (Kate Winslet) doesn't like to be unhappy. So, when her love story turns sour, she goes in for a scientific experiment and erases all memories of her romance with Joel (Jim Carrey). An aggrieved and vengeance-hungry Joel tries to do the same, but midway, he discovers there was a lot of sunshine in their affair; sunshine that he wants to hold onto. So he tries to hide those memories in hidden corners, even as scientists try to create the spotless, pain-free mind. Truly, this is a mind-altering love story.

## ▶ FRENCH KISS

ROMANCE | 1995 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
LAWRENCE KASDAN
CAST:
MEG RYAN, KEVIN KLINE,
JEAN RENO

Meg Ryan is probably Hollywood's most alluring archetype of a woman in love. Time and again, she has proved her artistry at displaying the mercurial moods of a diehard romantic who doesn't know how to handle the ups and downs of romance, yet comes out tops after the heartbreak and chaos. *French Kiss* sees her excelling in her role as Kate, the working class girl, who has been dumped by her boyfriend for a French sex goddess. Somehow, Kate tries to overcome her fear of flying and boards a flight to Paris to save her dying romance. But she didn't bargain for meeting a carefree crook (Kevin Kline) en route. He begins as her dubious co-passenger – he smuggles a stolen diamond necklace in her bag – and ends up as her soul mate. Blame it on passion-filled Paris, but this is pulp *pyaar* at its best.

## ▶ THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

ROMANCE | 1981 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
KAREL REISZ
**CAST:**
MERYL STREEP, JEREMY IRONS

It seemed an impossible task for many a Hollywood mogul to transform John Fowles' multilayered epic, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, on screen but only till Harold Pinter took up the challenge of re-writing it as a film script. Casting Meryl Streep as Sarah Woodruff, a mysterious *femme fatale*, who still waits for her lover, the French Lieutenant, despite being dumped by him, was the second coup for director Karel Reisz who ended up making a mystical ode to romance. Oscillating between two centuries – the 19th and 20th – *The French Lieutenant's Woman* traces the passions of two pair of lovers, both played by Meryl Streep and Jeremy Irons. While Sarah is the social outcast wooed by an English biologist, her modern-day avatar is Ann, the actress playing Sarah in a film on doomed lovers. Ann has a clandestine affair with the hero, Mike (Jeremy Irons, again), and follows a similar path of longing and lust. And both affairs are brimming over with unrequited passion…Meryl Streep represents the feminine mystique, unravelled.

## ▶ FUNNY GIRL

ROMANCE | 1968 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
WILLIAM WYLER
**CAST:**
BARBARA STREISAND, OMAR SHARIF
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (BARBARA STREISAND).

Barbara Streisand makes a startling debut in *Funny Girl* and sets the tone for a movie career that, like her looks, never really follows the straight and narrow path. As Fanny Brice, a chorus girl, who becomes a showstopper as a singing, dancing comedienne, despite her thin legs and unusual nose, Streisand is mesmerizing. And the fact that she does all the singing too in this high-octane musical adds to the splendour of her act. *Funny Girl* traces the irony of the entertainer's life, for Fanny may have delighted her fans vastly with her laugh-riots, but her love affair with an inveterate gambler (Omar Sharif) is a tale of unmitigated tragedy. Omar Sharif represents the angst of a man who cannot live up to his wife's larger-than-life status and feels overshadowed by her star status. Opulent sets, extravagant drama and unforgettable lyrics, *Funny Girl* redefines the word "Funny".

## ▶ GHOST

ROMANCE | 1990 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JERRY ZUCKER
CAST:
DEMI MOORE,
PATRICK SWAYZE,
WHOOPI GOLDBERG
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS.

In *Ghost*, Sam Wheat (Patrick Swayze) and Molly Jensen (Demi Moore) are happily roller-coasting through their Manhattan romance, till Sam falls prey to a mugging accident and Molly ends up alone with her potter's wheel and wet clay. Or so she thinks, but Molly isn't really alone. Her still-in-love investment-banker boyfriend returns as a ghost to protect her from his unscrupulous partner, Carl Bruner (Tony Goldwyn), who was behind his murder. And the only way he can communicate his grief, fears and passion is through the medium of psychic Oda Mae Brown (Whoopi Goldberg). Catch the touchy-feely ghostly encounter between Swayze and Moore to the music of "Unchained Melody" and feel the passion flow.

## ▶ GONE WITH THE WIND

DRAMA | 1939 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: VICTOR FLEMING | CAST: CLARK GABLE, VIVIEN LEIGH

Review: Page: 20

## ▶ HITCH

COMEDY | 2005 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ANDY TENNANT
CAST:
WILL SMITH,
EVA MENDES

Alex Hitchins (Will Smith), a date doctor, brings lovers together yet fails to manage his own love life. Ironical? But love, as the director points out, isn't a business that can be run, planned or premeditated. Love happens. And getting hitched has no hypothesis to go by with. That's the high point of *Hitch*, where Will Smith displays just why he is one of the most happening Hollywood stars. As Alex, a New York love specialist, who falls in love with gossip columnist Sara (Eva Mendes) while working on one of his cases, Smith is comic, cute, heartwarming and so very humane. And matching his skills are his savvy, somewhat cynical girlfriend, Mendes, and his client Albert Brennaman (Kevin James) — the fat, bumbling accountant — who wants to woo the svelte heiress. An intelligent comedy, *Hitch* gives a new twist to the age-old love story.

## ▶ IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT

ROMANCE | 1934 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: FRANK CAPRA | CAST: CLARK GABLE, CLAUDETTE CAULBERT

Review: Page: 22

## ▶ JERRY MAGUIRE

ROMANCE | 1996 | ★★★★

Jerry Maguire (Tom Cruise) isn't a perfect man and Dorothy Boyd (Renee Zellweger) isn't the hottest woman around. On the

DIRECTION: CAMERON CROWE
CAST: TOM CRUISE, RENEE ZELLWEGER, CUBA GOODING JR.
AWARD: OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (CUBA GOODING JR.).

contrary, Jerry is self-centred, aggressive, ambitious and seems to have a commitment phobia while Dorothy is homely, almost invisible, and a single mother. But Jerry is the sports agent who stands up for ethics and insists that people are more important. But when he is fired for his principles, Dorothy is the lone colleague who walks out with him – with his goldfish. Jerry and Dorothy not only have to start their business from scratch but also have to find equilibrium in their messed-up personal lives. The beginning of a bond that is heartwarming and full of soul...*Jerry Maguire* is romance at its unconventional best.

## ▶ LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDOURED THING

ROMANCE | 1955 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: HENRY KING
CAST: WILLIAM HOLDEN, JENNIFER JONES

*Love Is A Many Splendoured Thing* is a cross-cultural love affair. It is a leisured interplay between an oddball couple who meet, date and fall in love in Hong Kong in 1949, when the country is rocked by the communist takeover of China. A Eurasian doctor, Han Suyin (Jennifer Jones), meets Mark Elliot (William Holden), an American journalist, at a casual dinner and agrees to a date with him. Soon, the two are desperately in love and willing to face all impediments on their way, since Elliot is already married and Suyin is half-Chinese. A sentimental journey through a troubled landscape, the film is vintage amour.

## ▶ LOVE STORY

ROMANCE | 1970 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ARTHUR HILLER | CAST: ALI MACGRAW, RYAN O NEAL

Review: Page: 27

## ▶ THE MIRROR HAS TWO FACES

ROMANCE | 1996 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: BARBARA STREISAND
CAST: BARBARA STREISAND, JEFF BRIDGES, LAUREN BACALL

They are well past their prime and are confirmed singletons. And like many 40-somethings, they are sceptical about the institution of marriage. Problem is, they are also lonely. So, they take a Lonely Hearts dating appointment and meet each other. She (Barbara Streisand) is a professor of literature and he (Jeff Bridges) sees the world in mathematical equations. But they find common ground and, like all mature people, decide to marry, albeit the adult way. It has got to be just love and friendship and nothing more; none of that messy sex-and-emotion goulash that generally spells doom. But when is love an adult affair? And when did a cerebral discussion on prime numbers between a man and a woman steer clear of physical numbers? *The Mirror Has Two Faces* is witty, intelligent and resplendent with banter that is reminiscent of George Bernard Shaw.

## ▶ MOONSTRUCK

ROMANCE | 1987 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
NORMAN JEWISON
CAST:
NICHOLAS CAGE, CHER
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (CHER).

*Moonstruck* is a quirky treatise on love, with an undercurrent of comedy that adds a delightful touch to the drama. Cher, an American-Italian widow, lives with her parents and runs a bookstore to bide her time. And it is out of sheer weariness that she decides to marry her friend (Danny Aiello), even as her parents (Vincent Gardenia and Olympia Dukakis) try to live through their weathered marriage. But suddenly, the fatigue flips and Cher is moonstruck when she meets her fiance's estranged brother (Nicholas Cage). It's the beginning of a passionate affair that dazzles and fades like the leitmotif of the film: the big-as-pizza-pie moon. Watch out for Cher's magnificence as the bittersweet widow.

## ▶ MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING

ROMANCE | 1997 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
P.J. HOGAN
CAST:
JULIA ROBERTS, DERMOT MULRONEY, CAMERON DIAZ

Julianne Potter (Julia Roberts) dumps boyfriend Michael O'Neal (Dermot Mulroney) and makes him her best friend, promising to marry him at 28 if she hadn't found anyone else. Now, she's 28, out of college and has a problem at hand. She wants her best friend to become her boyfriend again after he tells her he is all set to marry a young heiress, Kimberly 'Kimmy' Wallace (Cameron Diaz), who has swept him off his feet. Julianne has just three days to sabotage the marriage and walk away as the bride, rather than a bridesmaid. Watch Julia Roberts play Ms Goodie Two Shoes with a lean-mean streak.

## ▶ MY FAIR LADY

DRAMA | 1964 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: GEORGE CUCKOR | CAST: AUDREY HEPBURN, REX HARRISON

Review: Page: 29

## ▶ NOTTING HILL

ROMANCE | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROGER MITCHELL
CAST:
JULIA ROBERTS, HUGH GRANT

Sometimes a drab bookstore can become the most exotic setting for a transcontinental, cross-cultural and class-hopping romance. In *Notting Hill*, it could have been business as usual for the introverted bookstore owner, William Thacker, but for the fact that America's greatest superstar Anna Scott (Julia Roberts) walks into his store to buy a book. If that wasn't extraordinary enough, William ends up spilling some orange juice on her designer T-shirt and takes her to his modest home for a clean up. Whoa! Anna is completely bowled over by the other side of the neon lights and it's the sheer ordinariness of her new friend's life that mesmerizes her. Romance beckons, until the paparazzi step in...the rest is a charming little rendition of the Cinderella myth re-told, with a gender-switch. Julia Roberts and Hugh

Grant have an electrifying chemistry that sparkles through awkward silences and half-sentences.

## ▶ ON GOLDEN POND

ROMANCE | 1981 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARK RYDEL
**CAST:**
KATHARINE HEPBURN, JANE FONDA, HENRY FONDA
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (HENRY FONDA) AND BEST ACTRESS

A poignant story about re-discovering the joys of relationships and easing out the knots and crosses in them, *On Golden Pond* is an ode to marriage and family, without being maudlin. An old married couple (Katharine Hepburn and Henry Fonda) returns to their long-abandoned home at Golden Pond where they are soon joined by their daughter (Jane Fonda) and her fiancé. It isn't an idyllic family reunion since the father and daughter's bond is fraught with undercurrents and resentment. It takes a boating accident and a little boy (the fiance's son) to unite the family together, as the crotchety old dad (Henry Fonda) re-learns lessons of parenting and bridges the gap with his daughter. Great performances. Gratifying drama.

## ▶ ONE FINE DAY

ROMANCE | 1996 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MICHAEL HOFFMAN
**CAST:**
MICHELLE PFEIFFER, GEORGE CLOONEY

In *One Fine Day*, two stressed out single parents meet one fine day when nothing seems to be going right. Their kids have missed the boat for a school trip, which means they need daycare but the babysitter has been given an off day. Their jobs are not the easiest in town, which means they have to rush in and out of their offices to meet deadlines and attend client calls. So what do they do? They reach a settlement: the single mom (Michelle Pfeiffer) and the single dad (George Clooney) swap parenting duties in order to meet their official commitments. Loads of hiccups, mess-ups and misunderstandings get interspersed with tender man-woman and cute kiddy moments, till the one-day affair works out into a memorable love story.

## ▶ OUT OF SIGHT

CRIME | 1998 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SODERBERGH
**CAST:**
GEORGE CLOONEY, JENNIFER LOPEZ

Want chemistry? Watch bank robber Foley (George Clooney) and kick-ass cop Sisco (Jennifer Lopez) play the cops and robbers game with passion and zing in this zany crime film. In *Out Of Sight*, Foley lands up in prison after a botched-up heist and attempts a prison-break by abducting the martinet marshal (Jennifer Lopez) and fleeing with her in the trunk of a car. That's the unconventional beginning of a wild romance that sees the exchange of some of the best repartee between man-from-Mars and woman-from-Venus. The battle of the sexes never got sexier.

## ▶ PRETTY WOMAN

ROMANCE | 1990 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: GARY MARSHALL | CAST: RICHARD GERE, JULIA ROBERTS

Review: Page: 30

## ▶ ROMAN HOLIDAY

ROMANCE | 1957 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
WILLIAM WYLER
CAST:
AUDREY HEPBURN, GREGORY PECK
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (AUDREY HEPBURN).

Audrey Hepburn made a dazzling debut in this breezy escapist romance and walked away with the Oscar for Best Actress. In *Roman Holiday*, Hepburn was ably supported by a rakish Gregory Peck. In the role of an American journalist, Peck plays the plebeian love interest to the truant and terribly bored British princess, who bolts from officialdom for a day out in lovely Rome. And what better than having as a dream companion the no-*nakhra* newspaperman who does not treat her like royalty. The Hepburn-Peck pizzazz lends this run-of-the-mill romance a rare sparkle.

## ▶ ROMEO AND JULIET

ROMANCE | 1996 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BAZ LUHRMANN | CAST: LEONARDO DICAPRIO, CLAIRE DAINES

Review: Page: 33

## ▶ SABRINA

ROMANCE | 1954 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BILLY WILDER
CAST:
AUDREY HEPBURN, HUMPHREY BOGART, WILLIAM HOLDEN

A chauffeur's girl takes a trip to Paris, returns as a glamorous diva, and re-works the Cinderella story by charming not one but two Prince Charming: rich playboy David Larrabee (William Holden) and his biz tycoon brother Linus Larrabee (Humphrey Bogart). It matters little that her father drives the Larrabee limousines, for isn't love supposed to conquer all, including class distinctions. But whom does Sabrina fall for? The playboy on whom she has had a crush ever since she remembers or the unromantic, business-obsessed elder brother who tries to cold-bloodedly woo her away from his sibling so that he can marry a rich heiress? It's the fireworks between Bogart and Hepburn that lend *Sabrina* a cult status among romantic movies.

## ▶ SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

ROMANCE | 1995 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ANG LEE
CAST:
KATE WINSLET, EMMA THOMSON, HUGH GRANT, ALAN RICKMAN

In *Sense And Sensibility*, Jane Austen's genteel world crackles and comes to life with amazing grace under Ang Lee's leisurely and lyrical direction. With deft and delicate strokes, Ang Lee creates the long-lost Anglican code of love and life. The trauma of the Dashwood family which suddenly falls on bad days and must look outward – the Dashwood girls must find suitable suitors –

AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

to reinstate their lost glory, is brought out with loving detail, even as the lush landscape lends colour and form to the film. Kate Winslet and Emma Thomson are riveting as two polarized Dashwood siblings who approach love in their individual ways. If Marianne (Kate Winslet) is impetuous and wild, Elinor (Emma Thomson) is patient and shy. Nevertheless, they find true love and it's Austen (read, happily) ever after.

## ▶ SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

ROMANCE | 1998 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN MADDEN
CAST:
JOSEPH FIENNES, GWYNETH PALTROW, GEOFFREY RUSH
AWARDS:
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST ACTRESS (GWYNETH PALTROW).

Despite its 16th-century aura and period costumes, *Shakespeare In Love* is not a historical epic. Nor is it an epical love story that is elevating, uplifting with a vision of the sublime. Instead, it is an unadulterated comedy that has a sparkling contemporary feel, despite being anchored in the past. The director's comic eye colours everyone with a rakish charm, including Queen Elizabeth (Dame Judi Dench) who never loses the twinkle in her eyes. Will Shakespeare too is the sweet and funny boy next door who beguiles his time in decrepit bars when he is a victim of a writer's block or is a wide-eyed lovelorn Romeo who knows he must lose his Juliet to a richer paramour. And when he's not rehearsing on stage, he's stealing plots and ideas from arch-rival Chris Marlowe. The film's highpoint is its brilliant script that is multi-layered and crisp. The inter-cutting between Will's life story with the beautiful Viola De Lessep (Gwyneth Paltrow) and the writing-rehearsing of *Romeo and Juliet* is the winning stroke.

## ▶ SINGIN' IN THE RAIN

ROMANCE | 1952 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: GENE KELLY, STANLEY DONEN | CAST: GENE KELLY, DEBBIE REYNOLDS, JEAN HAGEN

Review: Page: 35

## ▶ SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE

ROMANCE | 1993 | ★★★★

The old-fashioned romantic melodrama is redefined again in this sentimental journey that two people undertake before they finally meet each other. And what brings them together is a

DIRECTION:
NORA EPHRON
CAST:
MEG RYAN, TOM HANKS

radio talk show where the sleepless in Seattle guy, Sam Baldwin (Tom Hanks), pours out his grief over his wife's death. The novel idea of using a talk show is actually the brainwave of Sam's young son who thinks the best way to ameliorate his father's crushing grief is to send an SOS, seeking a new partner for him through the radio. Obviously, it's a million dollar idea that fructifies into a perfect romance after Sam's sorrow deeply affects Anne Reed (Meg Ryan), a casual radio listener, who can't seem to forget Sam's heart-rending lament. Time to cure Sam's sorrow-induced insomnia, she tells herself, even if it means breaking up with Bill Pullman, her not-so-romantic fiancé. Nice and mushy, *Sleepless In Seattle* could even turn sceptics into diehard romantics.

## ▶ TITANIC

ROMANCE | 1997 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JAMES CAMERON | CAST: LEONARDO DICAPRIO, KATE WINSLET

Review: Page: 39

## ▶ WALK THE LINE

ROMANCE | 2005 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JAMES MANGOLD
CAST:
JOAQUIN PHOENIX, REESE WITHERSPOON, ROBERT PATRICK
AWARDS:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (REESE WITHERSPOON).

A biopic on the turbulent life of Country Music maestro Johnny Cash (Joaquin Phoenix), *Walk The Line* vibrates with music and life. Not so much because of its storyline but due to its volcanic portrayal of the singer who was chasing demons all his life and his love interest, co-singer June Carter (Reese Witherspoon), who prefers a love expressed more in denial. *Walk The Line* follows the tumultuous sojourn of Cash from his boyhood days in the backwaters of an Arkansas cotton farm — where the accidental death of his brother changes his entire psychology — to Sun Studios, the Memphis musical Mecca, that was home to giants like Elvis Presley. Johnny's journey takes him through the archetypal underbelly of the pop world — drugs, alcoholism and infidelity. But what makes it different is the grandiloquent love affair with Alpha girl June Carter that helped him exorcise his demons and pick up the guitar again.

## ▶ WHAT WOMEN WANT

ROMANCE/COMEDY | 2000 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
NANCY MARSHALL
CAST:
MEL GIBSON, HELEN HUNT

They told us that men are from Mars and women are from Venus. Different, poles apart and on antithetical wavelengths. In *What Women Want*, they tell us wavelengths can be synchronised. But only in freak situations, when miracles happen. And bolts come from the blue. Men may be from Mars, but when special currents pass through them and their brainwaves are stirred with a particular force (like a hair dryer), they can also understand affairs from Venus. And then, the magic begins. Signor Gibson learns to understand what

Sigmund Freud failed to understand all his life: what women actually want, simply by reading their mind. Mel, the macho action hero of *Lethal Weapon* series, drops his gun. Nevertheless, he still kills. This time, with his deadly skills as a comic hero. As the ad executive who swings from ugly chauvinism to gentle gender sensitivity that wins the heart of his rival (Helen Hunt), Mel manages to create a compelling picture of the New Age Adam. A classic battle-of-the-sexes saga, *What Women Want* boasts of fine performances by Mel Gibson and Helen Hunt.

## ▶ WHEN HARRY MET SALLY

ROMANCE | 1989 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ROB REINER | CAST: BILLY CRYSTAL, MEG RYAN

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## ▶ WUTHERING HEIGHTS

ROMANCE | 1939 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: WILLIAM WYLER
CAST: LAURENCE OLIVIER, MERLE OBERON, DAVID NIVEN

Although Hollywood has tried to adapt Emile Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* time and again, it is Merle Oberon and Laurence Olivier who most convincingly convey the anguish of tragic romance between two of fiction's cult lovers. Oberon and Olivier bring to life the genteel Cathy Earnshaw and the tempestuous Heathcliffe. Like Bronte's masterpiece, the film conveys the dark, brooding tenor of unrequited love. The two protagonists race headlong towards disaster after Cathy chooses the wrong person, her rich neighbour (David Niven), as her husband. Following this, Wuthering Heights, the family's mansion, knows no peace as the ill-fated romance scars the lives of the inmates. Olivier is unforgettable as the tormented Heathcliffe who hurtles towards doom with passion-filled vengeance.

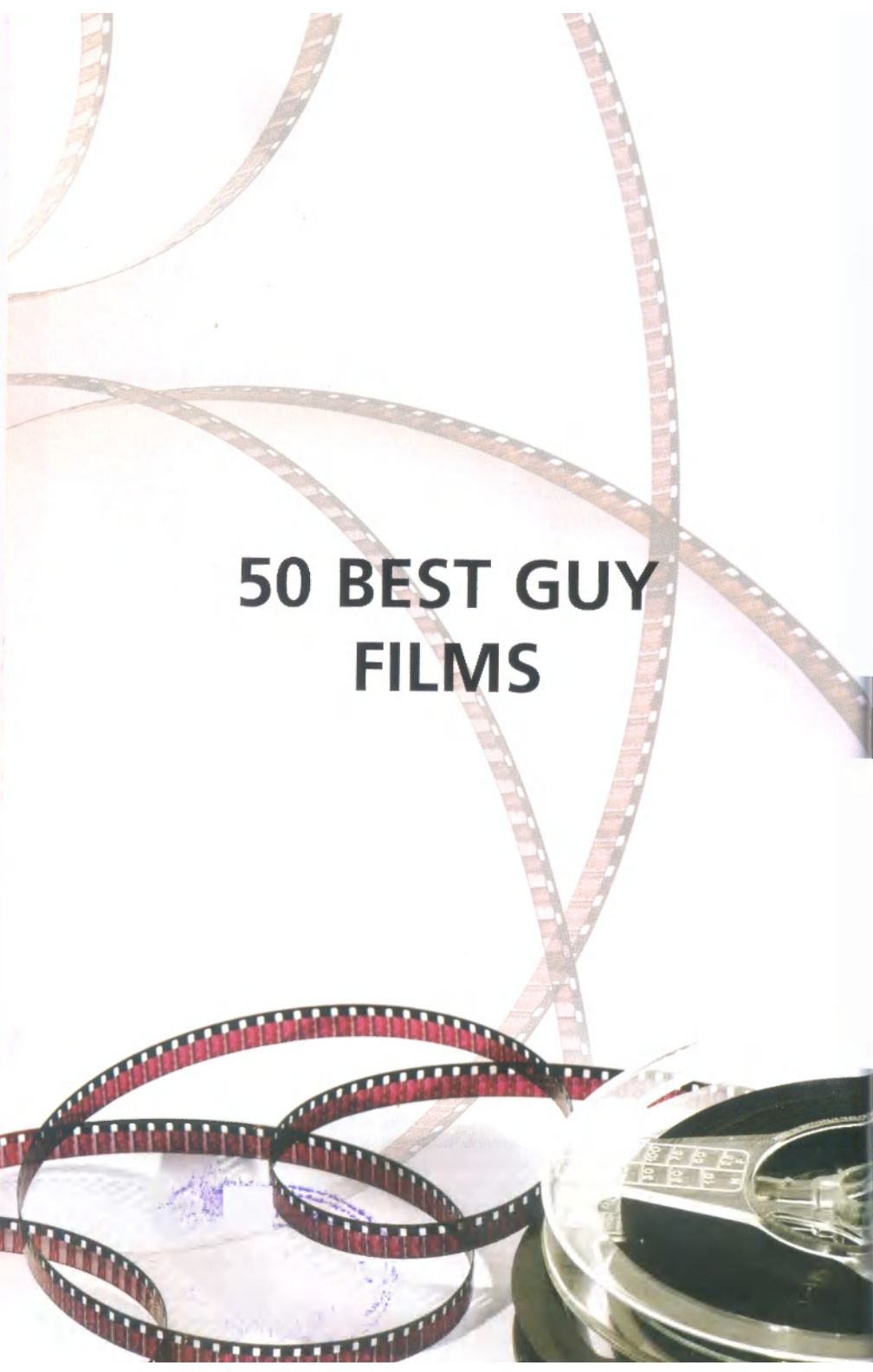
## ▶ YOU'VE GOT MAIL

ROMANCE | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: NORA EPHRON
CAST: TOM HANKS, MEG RYAN

So who's a soul mate? A modern-day fairy tale movie, *You've Got Mail* tries to posit a new answer to this age-old query. Prince Charming needn't be a perfect Greek god who comes riding on a white steed nor must Cinderella wait for the glass slipper to slip before she finds her dream man. Nah! He could be Joe Fox (Tom Hanks), the big fish next door, who is ready to swallow the little fish when his business gets into expansionist mode. And she could be Kathleen Kelly (Meg Ryan), the little fish, who loathes the greedy business rival who wants to take over her little shop around the corner. But their animosity seems to melt away in cyberspace as the two discover each other anonymously on the Internet. This New Age romantic tale sparkles due to the chemistry between its lead pair.

# 50 BEST GUY FILMS



## ▶ 12 ANGRY MEN

DRAMA | 1957 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
SIDNEY LUMET
**CAST:**
HENRY FONDA, E.G. MARSHALL, ED BEGLEY

In *12 Angry Men*, 12 white Americans, from diverse backgrounds, harbouring different prejudices, engage the viewer with their dramatic interplay that unfolds in one room. These are 12 jurors, called upon to decide the fate of a youth, guilty of murder. While most of them have already pronounced the accused guilty in their minds and would like to get back to their lives, juror No. 8 (Henry Fonda) isn't prepared to pronounce a rash judgment that might send an innocent person to the electric chair. He convinces the jury to reconsider the facts and examine whether the charged is actually guilty. Not an easy task, especially since the jurors have other things on their minds. It's a brilliant character study of men who are called upon to make important decisions that are not always based on sound reasoning and fair play.

## ▶ 48 HOURS

ACTION | 1982 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
WALTER HILL
**CAST:**
NICK NOLTE, EDDIE MURPHY, JAMES REMAR

*48 Hours* is the coming-of-age film for Eddie Murphy who creates a riot on screen as the sometimes funny, always smart convict, Reggie Hammond, who gets to play a cop for 48 hours and ends up doing a good job. He begins as a fast-talking, skirt-chasing bank robber who is serving a three-year jail sentence, with six months still to go. Life doesn't seem too exciting, until tough cop, Jack Cates (Nick Nolte), gets him out on parole for 48 hours and teams up with him to nab a cop killer, Albert Ganz (James Remar). The cop-criminal buddy factor is in crackling form with Murphy and Nolte complementing each other with their characteristic pizzazz.

## ▶ BATMAN

ACTION | 1989 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
TIM BURTON
**CAST:**
MICHAEL KEATON, JACK NICHOLSON

The high point of this version of *Batman* is its emphasis on high-octane action and a no-holds barred confrontation between good (Batman) and evil (Joker). There is no moody introspection on the origin of the caped crusader, no dilemma about the identity of this messiah of Gotham City. There is an

AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

allusion to his parent's death, but by and large, millionaire Bruce Wayne (Michael Keaton) is comfortable donning the rubber suit of Batman, slipping into his Batmobile and playing super-vigilante in the crime-infested metro. And if he has a delectable girlfriend (Kim Basinger) to brighten his days, he doesn't mind spending nights chasing the devilish Joker, a fiendish Jack Nicholson, who plays Jack Napier, the henchman who became the boss after an accidental fall into a drum full of chemicals created a physical and mental imbalance. Michael Keaton's restrained portrayal of the winged wonder complements Nicholson's melodramatic rendition of the Joker, which has gone down in Hollywood annals as one of the most charismatic faces of evil. Pure fun and games, this version of *Batman* is ageless.

## ▶ THE BIG LEBOWSKI

COMEDY | 1998 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOEL COEN
CAST:
JEFF BRIDGES, JOHN GOODMAN, JULIANNE MOORE, STEVE BUSCEMI

Jeffrey "The Dude" Lebowski (Jeff Bridges) is a winner all the way. So what if he's the archetypal loser, a drifter who wears baggy shorts, sports a belly and spends his time in the bowling alley with his two down-and-out buddies, Vietnam war veteran Walter (John Goodman) and moron Donny (Steve Buscemi). The Dude gets his chance to steal the limelight when he takes on the guys who dared to pee on his prized rug, mistaking him for rich man Lebowski, a millionaire with a trophy wife (Tara Reid) and a weird daughter (Julianne Moore). It's a mad caper – in characteristic Coen Brother's style – with the three buddies bumbling their way through one escapade after the other, with a lot of satire on Bush Sr. and the bumbling Gulf War.

## ▶ THE BIG SLEEP

CRIME | 1946 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
HOWARD HAWKS
CAST:
HUMPHREY BOGART, LAUREN BACALL

Detective Philip Marlowe (Humphrey Bogart) is a man without manners. At least that's what Vivian (Lauren Bacall), a beautiful and mysterious woman, tells him after their first meeting. And what does Marlowe do? Apologize? No, in one of *The Big Sleep*'s memorable quotes, he says, "I don't mind if you don't like my manners. I don't like them myself. They're pretty bad. I grieve over them on long winter evenings." So there you are. You have the politically incorrect hero, the arrogant mystery woman, a complicated case that begins with a minor indiscretion and veers into dangerous territory, where corpses begin to pile up and blackmail, treachery, shoot-outs threaten to mar the romance between the high-on-chemistry pair (Bogart and Bacall). Irresistible fare.

## ▶ BLADE

ACTION | 1998 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
STEPHEN NORRINGTON
**CAST:**
WESLEY SNIPES, KRIS KRISTOFFERSON, STEPHEN DORFF

In *Blade*, Wesley Snipes interprets the super hero in his inimitable style, one that almost presages Keanu Reeve's Agent Neo in the *Matrix* series. Here, he plays the vampire slayer, Blade, who meets a strong rival in Frost (Stephen Dorff), a young upstart, who has nasty ambitions that threaten the human race. He dreams of world domination by the vampire race. The only guy who can stop him is Blade, a half-vampire, half-human hero, who doesn't suck human blood and can survive the sunlight. Watch out for the lethal kung fu cuts that set the adrenalin pumping, real hard.

## ▶ THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM

THRILLER | 2007 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
PAUL GREENGRASS
**CAST:**
MATT DAMON, JULIA STILES

Renegade agent Jason Bourne's saga gets grittier in *The Bourne Ultimatum*, the third film in the Bourne Trilogy. Not only is Bourne impossible to kill, even though the entire might of the American secret police is gunning for him, but he is also an unconventional hero, fighting them in their lair. This time, in his search for his real identity, the amnesiac Bourne lands in the heart of the CIA headquarters. He discovers that he, like other agents, has been ruthlessly transformed from a normal human being into a cold killing machine. But before he discovers the truth about his identity, he must wage a long-drawn battle which sees him doing a Daniel Craig: indulging in heart-stopping runs-for-life where he leaps across buildings, drives cars down high-rises, hits hard and fast with his fists and shows what it means for the fittest to survive. *The Bourne Ultimatum* is a relentless action stunner that doesn't let you sit back for a moment. Get your thrills.

## ▶ BULLITT

ACTION | 1968 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PETER YATES
**CAST:**
STEVE MCQUEEN, ROBERT VAUGHN, JACQUELINE BISSET
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

*Bullitt* has one long sequence that makes it mandatory viewing for all action buffs. And that's the gritty chase sequence where San Francisco cop, Lieutenant Frank Bullitt (Steve McQueen), careens up and down the hills in hot pursuit of the gangsters. It's an 11-minute roller-coaster ride through death alley, where you almost forget who's chasing and who's being chased as the cars skid, jump, crash against each and have a million near-death encounters that leave you reeling under the impact. But that's not the only highpoint of this crime thriller. There's Steve McQueen's hard-nosed rebellious cop act that showcases his indefatigable valour despite being caught between the Mob and the politician (Robert Vaughn). Though he does have the beautiful Jacqueline Bisset for dramatic relief, that's just a momentary diversion. Great action!

## ▶ BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID

CRIME | 1969 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: GEORGE ROY HILL | CAST: PAUL NEWMAN, ROBERT REDFORD, KATHARINE ROSS

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## ▶ CASABLANCA

DRAMA | 1942 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: MICHAEL CURTIZ | CAST: HUMPHREY BOGART, INGRID BERGMAN

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## ▶ CASINO ROYALE

ACTION | 2006 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MARTIN CAMPBELL | CAST: DANIEL CRAIG, EVA GREEN, MADS MIKKELSON, JUDI DENCH

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## ▶ COOL HAND LUKE

CRIME | 1967 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STUART ROSENBERG
CAST:
PAUL NEWMAN, GEORGE KENNEDY, STROTHER MARTIN
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (GEORGE KENNEDY).

*Cool Hand Luke* is the story of a brave rebel who takes on the sullied system. The film showcases this perennial drama with near-perfection. If Strother Martin's jail warden represents the despotic Establishment, Luke Jackson (Paul Newman) is the archetypal non-conformist. He refuses to kowtow to irrational rules even if it means losing his life. A decorated war veteran, Luke ends up in prison after he decapitates parking meters in a fit of boredom. In prison, he emerges as a hero after he takes on the unofficial leader, Dragline (George Kennedy), and decides to escape. But he's caught and placed under tighter surveillance, even as the prison bosses begin a bestial campaign to break his spirit. But ah! Some men are born free and can never be tamed. Cool Luke's one of them.

## ▶ DIE HARD

ACTION | 1988 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JOHN MCTIERNAN | CAST: BRUCE WILLIS, ALAN RICKMAN

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## ▶ DINER

COMEDY | 1982 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BARRY LEVINSON
CAST:
STEVE GUTTENBERG,

A group of childhood friends set aside their adult blues and arrange a reunion at their favourite Christmas diner. And guess what's the discussion all about in this ebullient stag party? High *funda* guy stuff that revolves around girls, cars, sex and rock and roll on a therapeutic dinner of greasy French Fries, calorie-rich Cheeseburgers and endless cups of black coffee. No one's

DANIEL STERN, MICKEY ROURKE, KEVIN BACON

thinking about the pressure points: marital blues, the fearful species called "Women", job problems, maladjustment and other gnawing growing-up pains. But that's understandable, for isn't this supposed to be a celebration of Being Boyz, just Boyz? There's great camaraderie between the odd friends that includes Eddie (Steve Guttenberg), Timothy (Kevin Bacon), Laurence (Daniel Stern) and Robert (Mickey Rourke), an energetic cast that sets the house (or is it the diner?) on fire.

## ▶ THE DIRTY DOZEN

ACTION | 1967 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROBERT ALDRICH
CAST:
LEE MARVIN, ERNEST BORGININE, CHARLES BRONSON, JOHN CASSAVETES
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Twelve men on death row have no ostensible value for society, except as soldiers on a suicidal mission where they have to infiltrate and eradicate an impregnable German retreat. But when this Dirty Dozen comprise men like the rebellious john Cassavetes, the dumb Donald Sutherland, the unbreakable Charles Bronson, the wisecracking religious fanatic Telly Savales, be sure our anti-heroes will be able to redeem themselves and end up as honourable men. Because war isn't a civilized business, meant for gentlemen. It's left to a tyrannical Lee Marvin to first break these crooked souls and then train them for the final combat. Tom Hanks paid an ultimate tribute to this ageless war epic, *The Dirty Dozen*, by hailing it as the quintessential ``guys movie'' in *Sleepless In Seattle*.

## ▶ DIRTY HARRY

ACTION | 1971 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
DON SIEGEL
CAST:
CLINT EASTWOOD, HARRY GUARDINO, ANDREW ROBINSON

In *Dirty Harry*, Clint Eastwood raises the vigilante to cult status with his portrayal of Harry Callahan, a San Francisco cop, who follows no rules in his war against crime. They call him Dirty Harry because he's the guy who cleans up the dirt (read, criminals) when no one else can, simply because he fears no one and trusts no one, except his .44 Magnum. He displays his delectable brand of machismo when a desperate Mayor solicits his help after a psychopath (Andrew Robinson) holds the establishment to ransom and threatens to kill one person, at random, every day. Clint Eastwood's lean, mean cop act has become the archetype for the ultimate tough guy – the savage in a civilized world – in movie lore, spawning a million re-takes in world cinema.

## ▶ DR. NO

ACTION | 1962 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: TERENCE YOUNG | CAST: SEAN CONNERY, URSULA ANDRESS, JOSEPH WISEMAN

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## ▶ EASY RIDER

DRAMA | 1969 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
DENNIS HOPPER
CAST:
PETER FONDA, DENNIS HOPPER, JACK NICHOLSON

*Easy Rider* is undoubtedly a guy's film. It has captivating footage of two brawny men, riding their Harleys through the picturesque American outback, smuggling drugs in Mexico, filling their gas tank with dope money, and taking on the establishment with gusto. Wyatt (Peter Fonda) and Billy (Dennis Hopper) are New Age outlaws. In this modern western, whacko bikes replace wild horses. But the spirit – non-conformism – remains the same. The brazen duo break all rules and cross all boundaries, dreaming to settle down in sunny Florida and live out the American dream with their ill-gotten wealth. And if that's not engaging enough, there's a striking cameo by Jack Nicholson as a lawyer who befriends them in jail and remains the only person who understands these good-at-heart blackguards. A great ride, against a picturesque backdrop, *Easy Rider* is for the adventurer in you.

## ▶ ENTER THE DRAGON

ACTION | 1973 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ROBERT CLOUSE | CAST: BRUCE LEE, JOHN SAXON

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## ▶ FIGHT CLUB

ACTION | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: DAVID FINCHER | CAST: BRAD PITT, EDWARD NORTON, HELENA BONHAM CARTER

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## ▶ GLADIATOR

ACTION | 2000 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: RIDLEY SCOTT | CAST: RUSSELL CROWE, JOAQUIN PHOENIX, CONNIE NIELSON

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## ▶ GOLDFINGER

ACTION | 1964 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
GUY HAMILTON
CAST:
SEAN CONNERY, GERT

Is James Bond a man of style or a man of action? With *Goldfinger*, we settle the question. For Sean Connery effectively exhibits the various attributes of the super secret British agent. With some of the best one-liners and carefully orchestrated action cuts, *Goldfinger* proves that Agent 007 can kill, both by

FROBE, HONOUR BLACKMAN
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

his wit and weapons. Here, Bond takes on the ingenious gold-addict, Auric Goldfinger (Gert Frobe), a bullion dealer, who wants to knock down Fort Knox. And the only man who can stop him from fulfilling his devious plan is Bond who must battle Oddjob (Harold Sakata), the deadly henchman, who kills with his Frisbee-like bowler. Watch Bond stare death in the face, without batting an eyelid. Undoubtedly, *Goldfinger* represents the golden era (1960s) of the Bond franchise.

## ▶ GOOD FELLAS

ACTION | 1990 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MARTIN SCORSESE | CAST: ROBERT DE NIRO, JOE PESCI, RAY LIOTTA, LORRAINE BRACCO

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## ▶ THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

WESTERN | 1966 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: SERGIO LEONE | CAST: CLINT EASTWOOD, ELI WALLACH, LEE VAN CLEEF

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## ▶ THE GREAT ESCAPE

THRILLER | 1969 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JOHN STUGES | CAST: STEVE MCQUEEN, CHARLES BRONSON, RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH

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## ▶ HIGH NOON

WESTERN | 1957 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: FRED ZINNEMANN | CAST: CARY GRANT, GRACE KELLY

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## ▶ THE HUSTLER

DRAMA | 1961 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROBERT ROSSEN
CAST:
PAUL NEWMAN, PIPER LAURIE, GEORGE C. SCOTT, JACKIE GLEASON

Fast Eddie (Paul Newman) is a pool shark who spends his time winning and losing on pool tables and billiard rooms, only to learn the meaning of the word 'character'. What is the stuff winners are made of: that's his search as he battles his demons to take on Minnesota Fat (Jackie Gleason), the reigning champion, loses his money and self-respect, finds love with a loser (Piper Laurie) and confronts dubious fixers and middlemen (George C. Scott) who have their own scores to settle. *The Hustler* was the breakthrough film that catapulted Paul Newman into Hollywood's A-Club.

## ▶ IRON MAN

ACTION | 2008 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** JON FAVREAU
**CAST:** ROBERT DOWNEY JR., GWYNETH PALTROW, TERENCE HOWARD, JEFF BRIDGES

*Iron Man* may not have been the Big Hero of Marvel Comics, but here, in his first film avatar, he stands as tall as the rest of the masked crusaders. And the fact that he talks about contemporary problems – demilitarization and end of war – makes him all the more credible. Topicality isn't the only highpoint of the film. Robert Downey Jr., with his self-deprecating humour and casual swagger, gives a whole new angle to a Superhero. As Tony Stark, who doesn't care who buys his weapons, he's quite despicable. And he doesn't love himself either. So, when he gets a chance to redeem himself after being imprisoned by an Afghan warlord, he grabs the opportunity. Instead of creating the Jericho missile for the wily Afghan, he creates Iron Man, a one-man missile that can defend the world against all kinds of missiles. But after he escapes from the hideout, he realizes that the enemy is his business partner (Jeff Bridges) who dreams of world domination. But take heart, there's Iron Man, with his iron maiden – the delectable Ms Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow) – to teach all bad guys a lesson on peace. So what if it means more explosions, more violence ... Great action!

## ▶ LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

DRAMA | 1962 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:** DAVID LEAN | **CAST:** PETER O TOOLE, OMAR SHARIF, ALEC GUINNESS, ANTHONY QUINN
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## ▶ LIVE FREE OR DIE HARD

ACTION | 2007 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** LEN WISEMAN
**CAST:** BRUCE WILLIS, TIMOTHY OLYPHANT, MAGGIE Q

A gap of 12 years doesn't seem to have taken a toll on Hollywood's most *avant garde* cop, Johnny McLane (Bruce Willis). He's still the best bet against weirdos, psychopaths and terrorists. So what if he hasn't kept pace with the technological blitzkrieg? And so what if New Age terrorism has taken the form of a virtual war – they call it virtual terrorism – that threatens the world? McLane still has the never-say-die guts when the world begins to crumble. This time, it's literally so, for even as TV screens light up with stunning visuals of the White House doing a WTC, America readies for a more virulent 9/11, where everything comes to a standstill. The FBI is clueless as techno-geek Thomas Gabriel (Timothy Olyphant) wreaks revenge on a nation that had laughed off his concerns of virtual terrorism as the Next Big Threat. Now, it's left to our gloomy cop to save the world. And all he's got is a young hacker (Justin Long) to help him through the befuddling binary world. But that's only up to a point. When it's crunch time, the sole thing that works is Bruce's biceps as he kicks butt with delectable Maggie Q (an exquisitely choreographed fight) or 'kills' a helicopter with a car

because he falls short of bullets. And if that's not enough, he brings down an F16 with bare hands! After all this, anyone for Batman, Superman or Spiderman?

## ▶ THE LONGEST YARD

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: ROBERT ALDRICH
CAST: BURT REYNOLDS, ED LAUTER, EDDIE ALBERT

In *The Longest Yard*, Paul Crewe (Burt Reynolds) has a tough task at hand. A former superstar quarterback and current jailbird, he's got to build a football team from the thugs, thieves and rapists around him because the sociopath warden (Eddie Albert) wants his guards to have a bit of practice. The thrilling finale is a do-or-die match where prisoners use every tactic to browbeat their rivals whom they perceive as their enemy. And you end up rooting for the law-breakers. That's the power of drama!

## ▶ THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

ACTION | 1960 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: JOHN STURGES | CAST: YUL BRYNNER, ELI WALLACH, STEVE MCQUEEN, CHARLES BRONSON, ROBERT VAUGHAN, JAMES COBURN

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## ▶ THE MALTESE FALCON

CRIME | 1941 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JOHN HUSTON
CAST: HUMPHREY BOGART, MARY ASTOR

If anyone tries to dismiss Hollywood as denoting mere movies, *The Maltese Falcon* is the reality check. You can imagine the power of cinema by the mere fact that the Americans christened the bombs they dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II as Fat Man and Little Boy, two characters from *The Maltese Falcon*. The film gave Hollywood a whole new narrative style called film noir. Over the years, film noir has become the defining style for handling crime stories that unfold through a dramatic play of light and shadow and have a moody ambience that forms the backdrop for shady characters who weave their dark plots. *The Maltese Falcon* is unforgettable in the delineation of the dour hero, detective Sam Spade (Humphrey Bogart), who takes up a case about a priceless missing artefact, a black statuette of a falcon. He takes up the case on the behest of a

mysterious woman (Mary Astor) and soon realizes that he is not the only one looking for the falcon. Fat Man and Little Boy are also on the dangerous trail. Bogart's Spade is the quintessential anti-hero with ambiguous morals, and just a core of humanity. Unforgettable.

## ▶ THE MATRIX

SCI-FI | 1999 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: LARRY AND ANDY WACHOWSKI | CAST: KEANU REEVES, LAURENCE FISHBURNE, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS

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## ▶ MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

ACTION | 1996 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BRIAN DE PALMA | CAST: TOM CRUISE, JON VOIGHT, EMMANUELLE BEART

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## ▶ ON THE WATERFRONT

DRAMA | 1954 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: ELIA KAZAN | CAST: MARLON BRANDO, ROD STEIGER, EVA MARIE SAINT

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## ▶ THE PRIDE OF THE YANKEES

DRAMA | 1942 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
SAM WOOD
CAST:
GARY COOPER, TERESA WRIGHT, BABE RUTH
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

*The Pride of the Yankees* is a scintillating biopic on America's renowned baseball star, Lou Gehrig, who rose from the working-class quarters of Manhattan to become the country's favourite superstar. He joined the New York Yankees in 1925 and played almost 2,130 games for them, scripting an inspirational story of perseverance and power. Gary Cooper is perfectly cast as the young immigrant who articulated the American Dream in his success story. The film focuses on his super talent, friendly rivalry with legendary player Babe Ruth and his final struggle when he was only 36-year-old against a debilitating disease – amyotrophic lateral sclerosis – that cut short his brilliant career. Lou Gehrig's (Gary Cooper) farewell speech to his fans is milestone cinema, even today.

## ▶ RAGING BULL

DRAMA | 1980 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MARTIN SCORSESE | CAST: ROBERT DE NIRO, CATHY MORIARTY, JOE PESCI

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## ▶ RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

ACTION | 1981 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: HARRISON FORD, KAREN ALLEN, PAUL FREEMAN

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## ▶ RESERVOIR DOGS

THRILLER | 1992 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: QUENTIN TARANTINO | CAST: HARVEY KEITEL, TIM ROTH, MICHAEL MADSEN, STEVE BUSCEMI

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## ▶ ROCKY

ACTION | 1976 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JOHN AVILDSEN | CAST: SYLVESTER STALLONE, TALIA SHIRE

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## ▶ SCARFACE

CRIME | 1983 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BRIAN DE PALMA | CAST: AL PACINO, MICHELLE PFEIFFER, ROBERT LOGGIA

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## ▶ SERPICO

CRIME | 1974 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
SIDNEY LUMET
CAST:
AL PACINO, JOHN RANDOLPH

When Frank Serpico (Al Pacino) left the Police Academy, he was like any other cop: optimistic, enthusiastic, incorruptible and determined to put an end to crime. Gradually, in the line of duty, he realized he wasn't like any other cop. Why? Simply because he still remained virtuous, wide-eyed, incorruptible, while almost the entire NYPD had sold-out. The police department had metamorphosed into a form of the mafia itself, where graft exceeded modest incomes and corruption was rampant. Yet Serpico refuses to give up his honesty and takes on the entire police department, determined to clean-up the system. He ends up as the proverbial outcast whose days are numbered. But the fear of death can hardly cut short this cop's heroic mission. In *Serpico*, Pacino breathes fire and brimstone into his role.

## ▶ SHAFT

ACTION | 1971 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
GORDON PARKS
CAST:
RICHARD ROUNDTREE, MOSES GUNN
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Private detective John Shaft (Richard Roundtree) is uber cool. With his body-hugging turtlenecks, inky leather coat, defining holster and ability to swing from soft lover to hard player, he has fondly been described as the black equivalent of Bullitt and Bond. Here, he is hired by Harlem mobster Bumpy Jonas (Moses Gunn) to rescue his daughter who has been abducted by the Italian mafia. "Elementary, my dear Jonas," declares Shaft and performs the rescue act with precision and artistry. The testosterone-edged mission is peppered with mandatory shoot-outs, fisticuffs and car chases that only add to Shaft's charisma.

## ▶ SPARTACUS

DRAMA | 1960 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STANLEY KUBRICK
CAST:
KIRK DOUGLAS, LAURENCE OLIVIER, JEAN SIMMONS
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (PETER USTINOV).

Spartacus (Kirk Douglas) is a Roman slave who rebelled against the mighty Roman Empire. This singular revolt enabled him to carve a niche for himself in Hollywood history. Kirk Douglas immortalized the ultimate gladiator who was invincible. Spartacus is bought by Lentulus Batiatus (Peter Ustinov), a slave trader, for his gladiator school. And once Spartacus ends up as the best student and is paraded before the pampered ladies who want him to kill, he takes on the Roman government represented by the dictatorial Crassus (Laurence Olivier). Significantly, Spartacus uses his power to free other slaves and dreams of ending the barbaric practice. His heroism remains undiminished in this extraordinary epic. *Spartacus* is literally a confrontation of one powerhouse against the other, with sparks flying magnificently.

## ▶ SUPERMAN

ACTION | 1978 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: RICHARD DONNER | CAST: CHRISTOPHER REEVES, MARLON BRANDO, GENE HACKMAN, MARGOT KIDDER

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## ▶ TARZAN THE APE MAN

ACTION | 1932 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
W.S. VAN DYKE
CAST:
JOHNNY WEISSMULLER, MAUREEN O' SULLIVAN

He Tarzan; she Jane. And together, they make movie magic as the ultimate male and female fantasy. For the guys, there's the bare-chested, all-male hunk who swings from vines with his girl clinging to his steely frame. For the girls, there's the archetypal Prince Charming, shorn off his boring respectability, capable of saving her from all unknown dangers, leaving her vulnerable only to his animal charm. Johnny Weissmuller brought alive Edgar Rice Burroughs untamed hero, Tarzan, and made him unforgettable with his all-brawn machismo as he battles a panther and two lions, simultaneously, with a small knife. E-e-e-aah!

## ▶ THE UNTOUCHABLES

DRAMA | 1987 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BRIAN DE PALMA | CAST: KEVIN COSTNER, ROBERT DE NIRO, SEAN CONNERY, ANDY GARCIA

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## ▶ THE WILD BUNCH

ACTION | 1969 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: SAM PECKINPAH | CAST: WILLIAM HOLDEN, ERNEST BORGNINE

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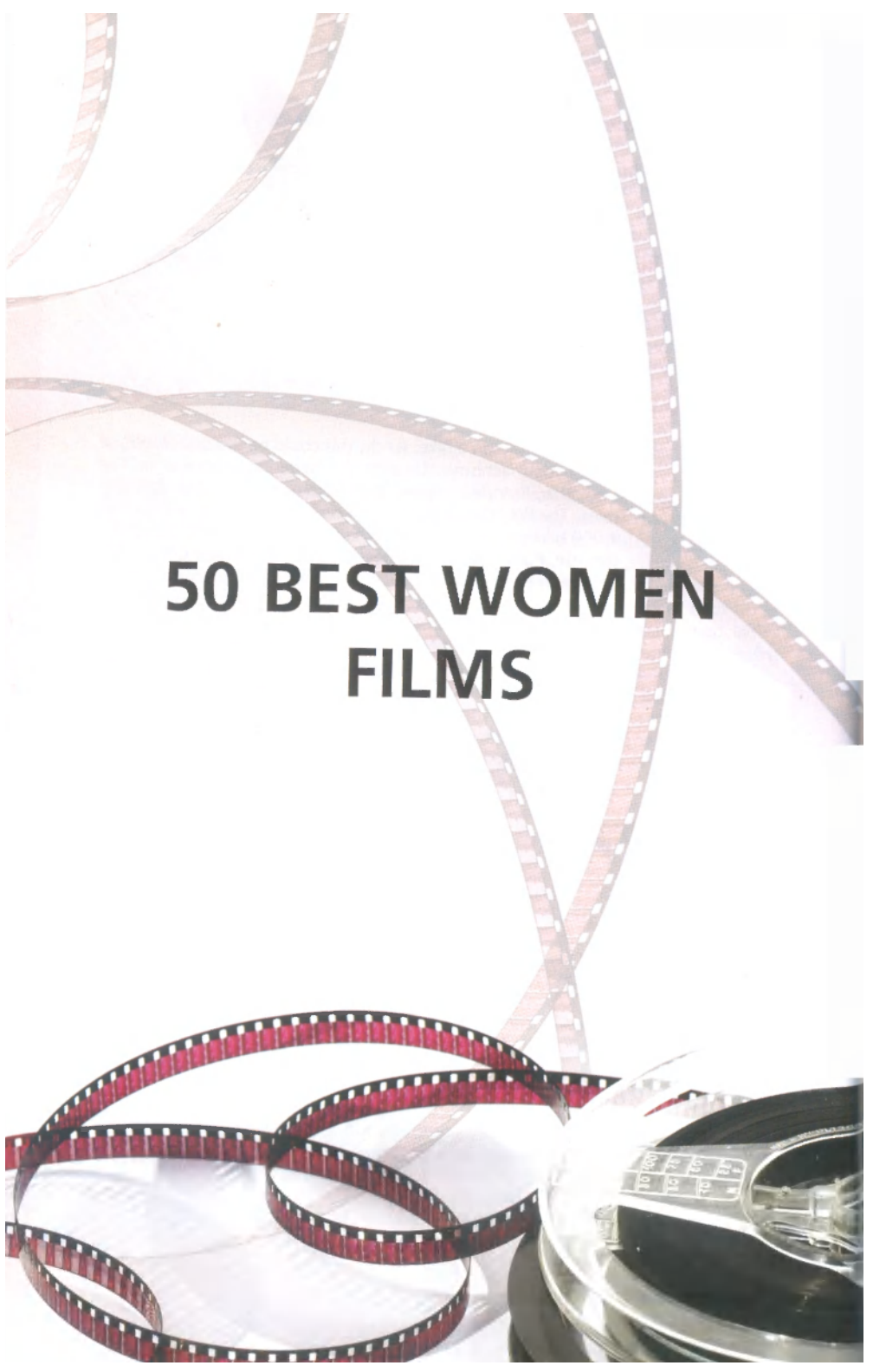
## ▶ THE WILD ONE

ACTION | 1953 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
LASZLO BENEDEK
CAST:
MARLON BRANDO, MARY MURPHY, LEE MARVIN

Marlon Brando on a bike: surely, this could be the quintessential poster for machismo. Despite the towering portrayal in *The Godfather*, Brando's Johnny Strabler remains one of his defining roles. *The Wild One* is based on a real-life incident when almost 4,000 bikers took over the town of Hollister in California. In the film, the Black Rebels have been reduced to a mere dozen, but their aura has been magnified. Brando plays the unpredictable young rebel who oscillates from anger, violence to shy reserve. But all along, his rebellious ardour represents the ultimate youth fantasy, where bikes become a symbol of freedom and violence, a reaction against a world that fails to understand them. In his autobiography, Brando has described Johnny as a sympathetic character, rather than a bad boy. According to him, Johnny was just a sad guy, nursing wounds of a miserable childhood. Memorable fare.

# 50 BEST WOMEN FILMS



## ▶ A MIGHTY HEART

THRILLER | 2007 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** MICHAEL WINTERBOTTOM
**CAST:** ANGELINA JOLIE, DAN FUTTERMAN, IRRFAN KHAN

A mighty topical film, that's mighty engrossing too, Michael Winterbottom's take on the Daniel Pearl murder is an edge of the seat thriller that hits hard, yet touches your heart. The story is familiar and part of post 9/11 headlines. Based on the book by Mariane Pearl, widow of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, *A Mighty Heart* follows the kidnapping of Pearl, the hunt for him and the aftermath of his murder by Pakistani *jehadis*. A five-month pregnant Mariane (Angelina Jolie) waits for her husband, Daniel Pearl (Dan Futterman), to return after an undisclosed assignment in Karachi. And when he doesn't, she sets about trying to hunt for him in a city that is chaotic and spilling over with rebels and fundamentalists. Of course, she has the FBI to help her, but she also has the talented Irrfan Khan who plays a Pakistani intelligence officer with his usual competence. Nowhere does the film get maudlin or loses the voice of sanity, despite the sensitive issue and the turbulent times. In the end, what remains after a futile search is Mariane's million-dollar message: the terrorists' purpose was to scare us, but we are not scared.

## ▶ THE ACCUSED

DRAMA | 1988 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** JONATHAN KAPLAN | **CAST:** JODIE FOSTER, KELLY MCGILLIS

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## ▶ ADAM'S RIB

COMEDY | 1949 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** GEORGE CUCKOR
**CAST:** KATHARINE HEPBURN, SPENCER TRACY

Is Eve actually born of Adam's rib? Good question. And if the answer unfolds through a comic battle of sexes, you can be assured of some good fun. Adam Bonner (Spencer Tracy) and Amanda Bonner (Katharine Hepburn) are happily married, but only as long as they don't end up in a courtroom, on either side of the law. For, the two are lawyers too. While Adam is a district attorney, called upon to play prosecutor in a case where a woman has allegedly shot her philandering husband, Amanda is the defendant's lawyer, hell-bent on proving that society has

a male bias. A man might have got away with such a crime, so why not a woman? The courtroom drama soon enters the bedroom and the marriage of Adam and Amanda turns into a game of one-upmanship. Witty and well scripted, *Adam's Rib* is a timeless gender bender.

## ▶ THE AFRICAN QUEEN

DRAMA | 1951 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: JOHN HUSTON
CAST: HUMPHREY BOGART, KATHARINE HEPBURN
AWARD: OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (HUMPHREY BOGART).

Charlie (Humphrey Bogart) and Rose (Katharine Hepburn) form an odd couple. He's a gin-drinking, rakish pilot of a steamboat and she's a genteel spinster who keeps emotions at bay. The two come together on an impossible patriotic mission during World War I: they plan to steer the shabby steamboat, *The African Queen*, down uncharted waters and use it as a torpedo to destroy a German gunboat, *Empress Louisa*, that has been obstructing the British counter-attacks. Set against the lush African landscape, the relationship between Charlie and Rose weathers many storms, almost like the doughty steamboat that combats dangerous swamps, waterfalls, rapids, rains, mechanical failures, blinding insect swarms and even a German offensive. It's vintage romance against an exotic backdrop. What more can you ask for!

## ▶ ALIEN

SCI-FI | 1979 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: RIDLEY SCOTT
CAST: SIGOURNEY WEAVER, TOM SKERRITT
AWARD: ONE OSCAR.

In *Alien*, initially Ripley was a role written for a man. Instead, it went to Sigourney Weaver who not only added punch to it but also completely rewrote the alien versus woman equation. Earlier, the female cast was supposed to faint or get hysterical in the face of real or supernatural horror. But Ripley, with her muscular frame and steely nerves, shows how a woman could stand up to a cannibalistic face-hugging alien force that was hell-bent on destroying the crew of *Nostromo*, a space ship, that would have been on Earth if it hadn't intercepted a signal from an alien spaceship. The alien ship is full of a cargo of leathery eggs, the skeletal remains of the alien pilot, the unfriendly environs of deep, dark space, and the monstrous alien lunging out of the innards of a crewmember. You'd be petrified if the no-nonsense, ever-dependable Ripley wasn't around.

## ▶ ALL ABOUT EVE

DRAMA | 1950 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ | CAST: BETTE DAVIS, ANNE BAXTER

## ▶ THE APARTMENT

DRAMA | 1960 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BILLY WILDER | CAST: JACK LEMMON, SHIRLEY MACLAINE

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## ▶ BASIC INSTINCT

THRILLER | 1992 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
PAUL VERHOEVEN
CAST:
MICHAEL DOUGLAS, SHARON STONE

When a former rock star is murdered in his San Francisco home by an ice pick, the prime suspect is Catherine Tramell (Sharon Stone), a pulp fiction writer, who was last seen with the victim. Catherine excels in writing trashy thrillers about murder and claims to know the mind of the killers she creates. It doesn't take long for Detective Nick Curran (Michael Douglas) to become besotted by this enigmatic suspect. She not only excels in playing the cat and mouse game with the law but also knows how to manipulate men, by simply uncrossing her legs during an interrogation. And the fact that she is averse to underwear only adds to the allure, sending the detective on a dangerous liaison with the woman who allegedly has a yen for ice picks and also mysterious brunettes. Watch the lethal combination of sensuality and guile as Sharon Stone brings to life the *femme fatale*.

## ▶ BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
GURINDER CHADHA
CAST:
PARMINDER NAGRA, KEIRA KNIGHTLEY, JONATHAN RHYS MEYERS, ANUPAM KHER

Cook *alu gobhi* like a *pucca desi kudi* or kick ball like iconic soccer hero David Beckham: that's the Hamletian dilemma that Gurinder Chadha poses in this feel-good film about female empowerment. Born and bred in a traditional Sikh family in old Blighty, Jesminder 'Jess' (Parminder Nagra) must fight against destiny that envisages a traditional future for the feisty girl. One where she would be rolling *chapattis* for her family rather than scoring goals for the women's soccer team. With exquisite comic flair, Chadha shows a clash of tradition versus modernity, in which Jess emerges as a poster girl for feminism, without any strident sloganeering or flag waving. Jess secretly joins the football team after being discovered by Juliette 'Jules' Paxton (Keira Knightley), a professional footballer, and trains for the big match while her family plans her sister's wedding. Of course, Jess finds romance and falls in love with her coach, Joe (Jonathan Rhys Meyers), even though this causes her to split with her friend, Jules. In *Bend It Like Beckham*, eventually, it's team spirit that soars and tradition that takes a back-seat.

## ▶ BONNIE AND CLYDE

THRILLER | 1967 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ARTHUR PENN | CAST: WARREN BEATTY, FAYE DUNAWAY

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## ▶ BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY

COMEDY | 2001 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
SHARON MAGUIRE
CAST:
RENEE ZELLWEGER, COLIN FIRTH, HUGH GRANT

Bridget Jones is the New Age Everywoman. She's the woman who sits in her little cubicle, nurturing raunchy fantasies about her domineering and arrogant boss. Having been bred on the mandatory diet of 'What's life without a Prince Charming?' Bridget doesn't have many options. She must find a decent man and settle down to a decent life in a decent suburb. But decent men don't come easy while indecent men are far more fun. Hence, Bridget's big New Year resolution: "Will find nice, sensible boyfriend and won't continue to form romantic attachments to any of the following: alcoholics, workaholics, commitment phobic, peeping toms, megalomaniacs, emotional f*ckwits or perverts." Alas! It's just a diary. And the 30-something city slicker must face the biggest dilemma: Daniel Cleaver (Hugh Grant), her playboy boss, who sends her raunchy emails or Mark Darcy (Colin Firth), the man who is sensible, reliable, dependable, amiable ... and boring. *Bridget Jones's Diary* scores in its delightful humour and its quirky take on love and longing. Bridget is no beauty queen, no quintessential heroine. She's fat, bumbling, fumbling, freaky and frumpy. Yet she's a winner.

## ▶ BRINGING UP BABY

COMEDY | 1938 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
HOWARD HAWKS
CAST:
KATHARINE HEPBURN, CARY GRANT

Susan Vance (Katharine Hepburn), a spoilt heiress, falls in love with paleontologist Dr. David Huxley (Cary Grant). She is determined to win him over despite his seeming lack of interest and his plans to marry someone quite like him: a quiet, somewhat boring, scientist who would assure his life wasn't turned into a roller coaster ride. But Susan can't take 'no' for an answer and ends up wooing her dinosaur-loving boyfriend, any which way. Even if it means tearing his tux and getting her dress torn in return or faking the helpless girl act by declaring that her pet leopard is attacking her. A funny, screwball film, *Bringing Up Baby* boasts of a scintillating performance by Katharine Hepburn who proved, way back in the 1930s, that girls actually wanna have fun.

## ▶ CARRIE

HORROR | 1976 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BRIAN DE PALMA
CAST:
SISSY SPACEK, PIPER LAURIE, JOHN TRAVOLTA

Though the shy, introverted, backbencher Carrie White (Sissy Spacek) is the typical girl-next-door, she is a social pariah in class. Interestingly, she has special abilities: telekinetic powers that enable her to move things. It's a power she's developed in her childhood to ward off the fury of an overbearing mother (Piper Laurie) who follows a repressive personal religion which forbids sex and subjects Carrie to long tortured sessions in a closet with the figure of a bleeding Jesus. As if her first period – while bathing in the school gym and becoming a butt of jokes

– isn't traumatic enough, Carrie is invited to the school prom by a bunch of schoolmates who want to teach her a lesson. Watch the prom night turn into a horror show in *Carrie*, as our girl interrupted unleashes her superpowers.

## ▶ CHARLIE'S ANGELS

ACTION | 2000 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MCG
**CAST:**
CAMERON DIAZ, DREW BARRYMORE, LUCY LIU, BILL MURRAY

Pop Kulture's kool definition of girl power is a delectable blend of Spice Girls and Batgirl. Saucy, sexy and with a great sense of humour, the New Age sirens in *Charlie's Angels* lend credence to the maxim that girls just wanna have some fun. Drew Barrymore describes the Angels as "capable as well as beautiful, without being afraid to flip their hair". So, when they are not chasing bad guys in *Charlie's Angels*, red haired Dylan Sanders (Drew Barrymore) is moonwalking to *Billie Jean*. Blonde Natalie Cook (Cameron Diaz) is playing the giggly, gushing girl on her first date with a shy bartender. And raven-haired Alex Munday (Lucy Liu) is sedately rehearsing lines from a movie with her beau. The plot? Something about chasing crooks who have stolen priceless software. What actually works for *Charlie's Angels* is the amazing chemistry among the three girls. They get along with a camaraderie that resembles a pajama party. They are cute, wild and informal, with Drew being the cutest, Diaz being the goofiest and Liu being the sweetest.

## ▶ CHICAGO

MUSICAL | 2002 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROB MARSHALL
**CAST:**
RENEE ZELLWEGER, CATHERINE ZETA-JONES, RICHARD GERE
**AWARDS:**
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

Rob Marshall's devilishly grand movie version of Bob Fosse's 1975 Broadway musical, *Chicago*, is an absolute winner from the very start when a mesmeric Catherine Zeta-Jones throws up her legs and croons *All That Jazz*. From the smoky Blues club to the dingy prison cells, *Chicago* is a roller-coaster ride through the underbelly of the 1920s entertainment industry in the Windy City. The film traces the rise of young, talented Roxie Hart (Renee Zellweger) in the cruel, dog-eat-dog world of vaudeville. Roxie dreams of following in the footsteps of her idol, Velma Kelly (Catherine Zeta-Jones), and is willing to do anything to face the arc lights. So, what if it means murder, lies,

perjury and betrayal? Here, where passion and ambition reign supreme, morality is easily expendable, whether for stars, wannabes or the charismatic yet venal criminal lawyer, Billy Flynn (Richard Gere). Wild, winsome, vibrant, *Chicago* is an absolute must-see.

## ▶ CHOCOLAT

DRAMA | 2000 | ★★★ ½

**DIRECTION:**
LASSE HALLSTROM
**CAST:**
JULIETTE BINOCHE, JOHNNY DEPP, ALFRED MOLINA

A widow, Vianne Rocher (Juliette Binoche), and her daughter, Anouk, arrive in a sleepy, remote town in a picturesque French village where restraint is the norm and self-denial the custom. Vianne creates a storm in the village's uptight regime with her sweet-as-sin chocolaterie and her bohemian lifestyle. Soon, her chocolaterie becomes the focal point where people meet, including maverick Roux (Johnny Depp). Vianne's clients are essentially those desperately seeking happiness, freedom, love and togetherness. And along with accolades comes censure. Mandarins of the church and administration feel threatened and regard Vianne as an amoral provocateur. Enlivened with moments of sheer joy, *Chocolat* is a breezy movie on freedom and self-realisation.

## ▶ DANGEROUS MINDS

DRAMA | 1995 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN N. SMITH
**CAST:**
MICHELLE PFEIFFER, BRUKLIN HARRIS

In *Dangerous Minds*, Louanne Johnson (Michelle Pfeiffer), an ex-marine, decides to become a teacher in a small-town school. But hey, what's this? What is generally regarded as one of the noblest profession turns out to be a nightmare, as Louanne is assigned a class of special kids who are the archetypal rebels from hell. After a traumatic first day at school, Louanne realises that she will have to scrap traditional teaching methods and employ unconventional ones. She begins with some kung fu hustle to impart discipline. After that, she uses candy bars, bribes to expensive dinners and use of Bob Dylan's songs to tame the dangerous young minds and transform potential sociopaths into social assets. Based on the real experiences of a teacher who used rap to teach students, *Dangerous Minds* shows Michelle Pfeiffer in glorious command.

## ▶ THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

DRAMA | 2006 | ★★★ ½

**DIRECTION:**
DAVID FRANKEL
**CAST:**
MERYL STREEP, ANNE HATHAWAY

The glitzy fashion world is primarily meant for those who flaunt Jimmy Choo shoes, not for the plain Jane comfortable in jeans and turtlenecks, holding forth on 'serious' issues that figure in the *New Yorker* rather than in *Vogue*. In *The Devil Wears Prada*, the New Age devil finds its avatar in Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep), czarina of the fashion world and editor of *Runway* magazine, who makes and breaks designers with a twitch of her lips and a flick of her talons. Her write-ups are the last word in

the world of fashion magazines. Enter cub reporter Andrea "Andy" Sachs (Anne Hathaway) who'd rather be writing in *New Yorker* than playing handyman to editor of *Runway* magazine as her assignments are like impossible missions. Keeping pace with the cut-throat world of fashion, the rookie finds herself being transformed into a Glamourzina who learns to jostle for her share of Prada. During her initiation, she discovers the angel within the devil and ends up being Streep's sensitive alter ego. A racy, biting look into the world of fashion and glamour, the film expertly showcases female bonding.

## ▶ DISCLOSURE

DRAMA | 1994 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BARRY LEVINSON
CAST:
MICHAEL DOUGLAS, DEMI MOORE

Not really a classic, yet *Disclosure* was hailed as a landmark film, simply because it tackled an unusual subject for the first time. The film focused on sexual harassment of men in the workplace, at a time when the corporate world had only confessed the existence of predator male bosses preying on vulnerable female employees. In a volte-face, *Disclosure* has Michael Douglas alleging sexual harassment after refusing a one-night stand with his new boss, Meredith Johnson (Demi Moore). Douglas, a computer scientist, is expecting a promotion but Moore lands the plum assignment instead. She invites him to her cabin and tries to seduce him. Douglas holds back after a few moments of breathless heaving and petting. He soon realises that's not the end of the inadvertent foreplay. Corporate intrigue laced with sexual tension makes for a heady potion, with Moore and Douglas playing perfect adversaries.

## ▶ ELIZABETH

PERIOD | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
SHEKHAR KAPUR
CAST:
CATE BLANCHETT, GEOFFREY RUSH, JOSEPH FIENNES
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

*Elizabeth* is a visual delight, where history isn't treated as a mothballed story from dog-eared textbooks. England's Golden Age (the 16th-century), under its Virgin Queen (Elizabeth I), has been dealt in a warm, dramatic and intensely human fashion, in contrast to the cold and clinical handling of historical facts in many films. Interestingly, Shekhar Kapur focuses on the initial years when Elizabeth's tumultuous ascent to power has all the *masala* of high drama. The court intrigues are shadowy and ominous, romance is clandestine and passionate and the regalia riveting. Even as the metamorphosis of the young, carefree maiden into an ashen-faced monarch in a man's world becomes a meaningful feminist parable.

## ▶ ERIN BROCKOVICH

DRAMA | 2000 | ★★★★

Erin Brockovich isn't extraordinary. She is the antithesis of nice young things. Consider the downside in her life. Erin's been

**DIRECTION:** STEVEN SODERBERGH
**CAST:** JULIA ROBERTS, ALBERT FINNEY
**AWARD:** OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (JULIA ROBERTS).

divorced twice. A high-school dropout, she has three kids, keeps changing boyfriends, dresses outrageously and her language is invariably peppered with four-letter words. Is Erin a hero? Not by conventional norms. One look at her plunging necklines, rising hemlines, brattish behaviour and people promptly dismiss her with expletives. Loose, immoral, hooker-like... But Erin turns out to be a winner. She not only wins the largest settlement ever paid in a direct-action lawsuit in US history but also changes the lives of 600 plaintiffs in her small, desert town. And she does all this accidentally while working as a file clerk. In the small law firm where she works, she stumbles upon a cover-up involving industrial poisoning in the community. Erin redefines women power. And the fact that *Erin Brockovich* is based on a real-life story only shows that strong women do exist. Indeed, Julia Roberts deserves accolades for her electrifying depiction of a balsy woman.

## ▶ FARGO

THRILLER | 1996 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** JOEL AND ETHAN COEN
**CAST:** WILLIAM H. MACY, STEVE BUSCEMI, FRANCES MCDORMAND
**AWARDS:** TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (FRANCES MCDORMAND).

Jerry Lundegaard (William H. Macy), a desperate car salesman, wants his father-in-law to give him some money for his new business. And the only way to get the moolah is by staging his wife's kidnapping and sharing the ransom money with two goons whom he hires for the job. But at times even the best-laid plans go awry, and so does the kidnapping. Subsequently, the police chief, a seven-month pregnant Marge Gunderson (Frances McDormand), discovers two corpses on a highway. The police chief shrewdly begins to piece together the clues and doggedly pursues the suspects. Intelligent, compassionate and unperturbed, she brings to life an Oscar-winning portrait of a small-town policewoman who believes there's more to life than a little bit of money.

## ▶ FATAL ATTRACTION

THRILLER | 1987 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** ADRIAN LYNE | **CAST:** MICHAEL DOUGLAS, GLENN CLOSE, ANNE ARCHER
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## ▶ FRIDA

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** JULIE TAYMOR
**CAST:** SALMA HAYEK, MIA MAESTRO, ALFRED MOLINA
**AWARDS:** TWO OSCARS.

It's 1953. Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (Salma Hayek) is hosting her sole one-woman show at a gallery, but is too sick to attend the opening. Does Frida give in to her ailments? Never. She gets her bed lifted in a truck and carried to the gallery. That's the diehard spirit that this biopic captures as it brings to life the unconventional musings of Frida who spent most of her life in agony, after a crippling accident that broke her spine, but her spirit remained undefeated. Frida's passion for life and love find expression in her dazzling artwork that showcased her alone, in

solitary splendour, or with her lover, famous Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (Alfred Molina). *Frida* captures the extraordinary life of a woman who lived by her own rules and made her own definitions – of love, sex, fidelity and loyalty – in a man's world.

## ▶ FUNNY GIRL

ROMANCE | 1968 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: WILLIAM WYLER | CAST: BARBARA STREISAND, OMAR SHARIF

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## ▶ GIRL, INTERRUPTED

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JAMES MANGOLD
CAST:
WINONA RYDER, ANGELINA JOLIE, WHOOPI GOLDBERG, VANESSA REDGRAVE
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (ANGELINA JOLIE).

Powerhouse performances by Angelina Jolie, Winona Ryder and the rest of the *Interrupted* girls make for uninterrupted viewing. Set in the fast changing 1960s, *Girl, Interrupted* is the true story of Susanna Kaysen (Winona Ryder) who gets admitted in a renowned mental institution, after she tries to end her life for no ostensible reason. Just depression. In the institution, Susanna finds she's no longer alone. For society and its strange norms have thrown up misfits who survive on the fringes of existence. Susanna finds Daisy, victimised by her father, and Lisa Rowe (Angelina Jolie) who brightens up the dreary institution with her beatnik irreverence. Superficially, it's a nice world where Valium helps inmates to cope. But this world isn't real. In short, it isn't the world where girls belong, interrupted or uninterrupted. Moving stuff.

## ▶ GONE WITH THE WIND

DRAMA | 1939 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: VICTOR FLEMING | CAST: CLARK GABLE, VIVIEN LEIGH

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## ▶ INDECENT PROPOSAL

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★½

David Murphy (Woody Harrelson) and Diana (Demi Moore) are deeply in love. Ever since they met in architecture school, it has

DIRECTION:
ADRIAN LYNE
CAST:
ROBERT REDFORD, DEMI MOORE, WOODY HARRELSON

been happily-ever-after for them. Till they fall upon bad days. David loses all his money, including the $5,000 he gambled to prevent the sale of their dream house. The only way out for them to carry on their fairy tale existence is by taking up the indecent proposal made by millionaire John Gage (Robert Redford). He offers a million dollars for one night with the delectable Diana. The couple relent after a brief debate on the ethics involved, only they didn't expect the one-night business proposition to derail their lives altogether. It's a riveting triangle, where no one is the villain. However, the emotion of unalloyed love gets endangered, as David and Diana fall apart, and John doesn't seem a heartless Mr. Moneybags anymore.

## ▶ JACKIE BROWN

CRIME | 1997 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
QUENTIN TARANTINO
CAST:
PAM GRIER, SAMUEL L. JACKSON, ROBERT DE NIRO

Jackie Brown (Pam Grier) is a flight attendant on board America's lowest-paid airlines. So, she needs to make extra money, even if it means smuggling cash from Mexico to Los Angeles for Ordell Robbie (Samuel L. Jackson), a trigger-happy gun dealer. Trouble begins when one of the deals falls through and cops arrest Jackie for smuggling a huge amount of cash. To her rescue comes a bail bondsman, Max Cherry (Robert Forster), who bails her out. He falls in love with her and helps her to outwit Ordell and walk away with the booty. Long before Quentin Tarantino created "The Bride" (Uma Thurman) in *Kill Bill*, he created *Jackie Brown*, a woman who could hold her own and ends up as master of the game in a male-dominated world of crime.

## ▶ JULIA

DRAMA | 1977 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
FRED ZINNEMAN
CAST:
JANE FONDA, VANESSA REDGRAVE, JASON ROBARDS
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (VANESSA REDGRAVE).

Playwright Lillian Hellman (Jane Fonda) looks for inspiration for her new play and goes down memory lane to recreate the special bond she shared with Julia (Vanessa Redgrave), a feisty young girl, during pre-World War II. The two may have lost touch over the years, but Julia's valiant efforts to save Jews from the fury of Nazis still remains fresh in Hellman's memory as she ventures out to rebuild contact with her friend and hero. A gritty story about female bonding and woman power.

## ▶ JUNO

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★★

*Juno* tackles a tangled topic – teen pregnancy – without getting tied down into knots. It scores in its no-nonsense approach. Sixteen-year-old Juno MacGuff (Ellen Page) loses her virginity to

DIRECTION:
JASON REITMAN
CAST:
ELLEN PAGE, MICHAEL CERA, JENNIFER GARNER
AWARD: ONE OSCAR.

high-school buddy Paulie Bleeker (Michael Cera) and becomes pregnant. She tells her parents about it and decides to go through the pregnancy and give up her baby for adoption. Her dad helps her find a suitable couple (Jennifer Garner and Jason Bateman) and life goes on normally. Juno feels left out when she's not invited to the prom, but finds a dance partner in the foster dad. But it's the real dad, Paulie, whom she loves even though, like her, he's gawky and immature. And it's the sheer gawkiness of this no-holds-barred film that makes it a winner. *Juno* neither celebrates nor condemns teen pregnancy but treats it as life's reality that needs to be sensitively handled. The youthful idiom, deftly created through the language and attitude of Juno and her friends, makes the film a mirror of its times.

## ▶ KILL BILL VOLUME 1

ACTION | 2003 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: QUENTIN TARANTINO | CAST: UMA THURMAN, LUCY LIU, DAVID CARRADINE
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## ▶ LARA CROFT: TOMB RAIDER

ACTION | 2001 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
SIMON WEST
CAST:
ANGELINA JOLIE, JOHN VOIGHT

Lara Croft (Angelina Jolie), with her long braid, thigh holsters and kick-ass adventures, seems the perfect embodiment of the virtual heroine who has been charming PlayStation addicts for long. *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* is a no-brainer flick that scores only because it pumps up the adrenalin high, very high. Again, here's a do-or-die mission for British heiress Lara Croft. She must save the world by foiling the plot of a bunch of mercenary thugs who are hell-bent on stealing an ancient artefact that will make them as powerful as the Almighty. Sit back Indiana Jones, the super chick is determined to steal the thunder. Watch it, but just for kicks. And the Angelina oomph.

## ▶ MILDRED PIERCE

DRAMA | 1945 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
RICHARD CURTIS
CAST:
JOAN CRAWFORD, JACK CARSON, ANN BLYTH
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (JOAN CRAWFORD).

Based on a schmaltzy novel by James M Cain, *Mildred Pierce* is the story of a feisty woman (Joan Crawford) who comes into her own after her husband walks out on her. Refusing to be cowed down by circumstances, she becomes a successful restaurateur. She aims to provide a secure future for her two young daughters: one good, the other selfish. However, fate deals Mildred a cruel blow when her conniving daughter Veda (Ann Blyth) scripts her downfall and gets her embroiled in a false murder charge. Joan Crawford adds substance and grandeur to the role of the quintessential mother in this rags-to-riches tale of a strong and independent woman.

## ▶ MILLION DOLLAR BABY

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
CLINT EASTWOOD
**CAST:**
CLINT EASTWOOD, HILARY SWANK, MORGAN FREEMAN
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTION, BEST ACTRESS (HILARY SWANK).

*Million Dollar Baby* is a high adrenalin testament of female empowerment. It is the strongest feminist statement made in recent times. Though a debate on euthanasia emerges as a subtext, *Million Dollar Baby* essentially belongs to Maggie Fitzgerald (Hilary Swank) and her attempts to transcend her destiny as American trawler trash. Maggie has been a down-and-out waitress, washing dishes and stealthily pocketing leftovers. Nothing's on her side, not even age. For now, she's 30-something and wants to be a professional boxer. Why? Because when she punches the bag, she's punching everyone who has denied her a chance to live a decent, successful life. Her only hope is cynical Frankie Dunn (Clint Eastwood), a trainer, who runs a gym and trains only guys, not girls. Maggie's persistence makes him relent and soon they are making headlines, as Maggie becomes America's prizefighter. Till tragedy strikes. Swank and Eastwood pitch in riveting performances, truly justifying the shower of Oscar awards for the film.

## ▶ THE NAMESAKE

DRAMA | 2006 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MIRA NAIR
**CAST:**
TABU, IRRFAN KHAN, KAL PENN

If *Monsoon Wedding* was a rumbustious celebration of India (read, Punjabi culture), *The Namesake* is a haiku about Hindustan: minimalist, magical and intensely moving. Mira Nair takes Jhumpa Lahiri's novel and transforms it into sheer visual poetry. *The Namesake* captures the journey of two generations of the Ganguli family in the US. Ashima and Ashoke (Tabu and Irrfan) leave for the US after an arranged marriage and try to build a home and a life in a culture that, simultaneously, lures and scares them. They need to discover each other and the new country. However, their passage is almost lyrical and the hiccups en route are mild. The story soon shifts to the second generation – the son Gogol (Kal Penn) and daughter Sonia (Sahira Nair) – who ostensibly are thoroughbred Americans. Except that Gogol can't understand why he has been given such a strange name. They go through the regular round of Americanisms, only to find that the long journey of self-discovery beckons them. India is an idea that lives in the heart and the mind, rather than a land-locked territory. Great performances, an iridescent canvas and a topical theme, *The Namesake* is Mira Nair's tribute to her *janmabhoomi.*

## ▶ NINOTCHKA

COMEDY | 1939 | ★★★½

In *Ninotchka*, Greta Garbo perfected the role of the ice maiden – her archetypal image – who takes the entire length and breadth of the film to melt into the arms of the man who had been wooing her from the start. It's a classic clash-of-culture film

**DIRECTION:**
ERNST LUBITSCH
**CAST:**
GRETA GARBO, MELVYN DOUGLAS

where Ninotchka, an unsmiling, Stalinesque Russian officer, is sent to Americanised Paris on a mission to recover some jewels that belong to the communist state. Here, in the midst of French hedonism, she meets the ultimate bourgeois, Count Leon (Melvyn Douglas), and dismisses him for his frivolous tastes which are simply a product of 'decadent culture'. It does take long – almost half the film is gone before she flashes her first smile – but Ninotchka discovers that Eiffel Tower is much more than mere cold steel and the man-woman equation isn't just clinical chemistry. A great comedy, with some of the wittiest one-liners, *Ninotchka* is the portrait of winsome womanliness throbbing beneath stiff-collared business suites and feminazi *fundas*.

## ▶ NORMA RAE

DRAMA | 1979 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN RITT
**CAST:**
SALLY FIELD, RON LEIBMAN
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (SALLY FIELD).

Before Erin Brokovich, there was Norma Rae: a female activist who changed the life of her community by teaching them the power of protest. A small-town working-class girl, Norma (Sally Field) is a single mother who ends up as a firebrand union leader and organizes the cotton mill workers into a union that protests against low wages and dismal working conditions. All this, at a time when union leaders were treated as pariahs by fearful workers who dismissed them as communists, agitators, crooks, Jews or all four rolled into one. In *Norma Rae*, watch women power unleashed as Norma shuts down her machine and stands on a table, with the word "UNION" hastily written on a placard. In a stupendous show of solidarity among the workforce, soon all machines shut down.

## ▶ NOTORIOUS

THRILLER | 1946 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ALFRED HITCHCOCK
**CAST:**
CARY GRANT, INGRID BERGMAN, CLAUDE RAINS

Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman) is notorious for her promiscuity and wild lifestyle. But despite being the daughter of a Nazi spy, she's a diehard patriot at heart. However, she doesn't wear her patriotism on her sleeve and would rather go for a cruise than work for Devlin (Cary Grant), the US intelligence agent, who wants to enlist her support to nab Alex Sebastian

(Claude Rains), who heads a Nazi ring and hosts German scientists as houseguests. Alicia agrees to work as a US spy in Rio and enter the life of the Nazi, only because she has fallen in love with the devilish Devlin who refuses to admit his feelings for the irresistible agent. *Notorious* boasts of one of the longest kisses in Hollywood history, where the dashing duo lock lips for almost three minutes and display a sexual chemistry that sets the screen on fire. More importantly, *Notorious* showcases Hitchcock's mesmerizing film idiom, like never before. Bergman perfects the role of the woman as the anti-hero and, despite her notoriety, remains a towering figure.

## ▶ SECRET AND LIES

DRAMA | 1996 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: MIKE LEIGH
CAST: TIMOTHY SPALL, BRENDA BLYTHN, MARIANNE JEAN-BAPTISTE

Family reunions aren't always the nicest of social events. At times, they can be explosive and tear the family apart. In *Secret And Lies*, it takes a barbecue in an afternoon to send a dysfunctional family into a tizzy. An ordinary birthday party is soon transformed into a free-for-all blame game and messy confessional, with secrets and lies threatening to tear the family asunder, till good sense prevails... Brenda Blythn, a hysterical bundle of nerves, works in a cardboard box factory and lives in an untidy council house with her edgy daughter. The middle-aged white woman spends most of her time complaining and finds more reason to whine about when a young, successful black girl suddenly rings her up and tells her she's her daughter. "But how can you be, dearie?" she screams, until her past alliances flash before her eyes. Soon, Brenda begins to bond with her newfound daughter, who had been given up for adoption at birth. And it isn't long before Brenda dares to share her 'secret' with her distraught family. In the end, love transcends the web of mistrust and deceit in this heartwarming ode to the institution of family.

## ▶ SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

ROMANCE | 1995 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ANG LEE | CAST: KATE WINSLET, EMMA THOMSON, HUGH GRANT, ALAN RICKMAN

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## ▶ THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

THRILLER | 1991 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JONATHAN DEMME | CAST: ANTHONY HOPKINS, JODIE FOSTER

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## ▶ SILKWOOD

DRAMA | 1983 | ★★★★

In real life, Karen Silkwood (Meryl Streep) is an ordinary woman who works in a nuclear plant at Oklahama, making plutonium

DIRECTION:
MIKE NICHOLS
CAST:
MERYL STREEP, KURT RUSSELL, CHER

rods for nuclear reactors. When the company is forced to cut corners and jeopardize the safety of its workers in order to meet a bulk order, she decides it is time for her to stand up for rights of the endangered workers. She sets out in her car to hand over some incriminating documents to a New York reporter. The car meets with an accident, Karen dies, no one is arrested and the documents are never found. Obviously, corporate muscle and the profit motive have won over individual valour and the general good. Kudos to Meryl Streep for her life-like portrayal of a real-life hero whose courage, sense of justice and fair play make her exceptional. *Silkwood*, essentially a biopic, remains topical even today as multinationals put workers' welfare way below the bottom line.

## ▶ SPECIES

SCI-FI | 1995 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
ROGER DONALDSON
CAST:
NATASHA HENSTRIDGE, BEN KINGSLEY, MICHAEL MADSEN

In a secret lab, scientists create a new species after they mix an alien DNA string, picked up from outer space, with human DNA. The species takes the form of a little girl who grows up in leaps and bounds. Within a short while, she grows from a newborn to a 10-year-old and, finally, a 21-year-old. By now, the species, Sil (Natasha Henstridge), is out of human control as she escapes from the clinical environs of the lab and begins to hunt down hunks, simply because she's desperate to mate. It takes a low-key alien-catcher (Ben Kingsley) and his team to tame the species, but only after it has metamorphosed from a sexy seductress to a man-eating monster. Ostensibly a B-grade thriller, *Species* went on to become a box-office winner, with Natasha Henstridge playing the role of a predator siren to perfection.

## ▶ STEPMOM

DRAMA | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS
CAST:
SUSAN SARANDON, JULIA ROBERTS, ED HARRIS

*Stepmom* is a refreshing film on several counts. First, this woman-befriends-woman saga conjures up a brave new world where women are no longer the second sex, with or without men. And second, because this heartwarming tale of female bonding comes alive through scintillating portrayals by Susan Sarandon and Julia Roberts, two women who fall in love with the same man. Jackie (Susan Sarandon) is Luke's (Ed Harris) ex-wife who lives with her two children and faces the rigours of single motherhood with amazing courage. She doesn't break down despite her initial animosity towards Isabel, the woman who wants to step into her shoes. Isabel (Julia Roberts), the other woman, has a demanding career but desperately tries to learn the lessons of motherhood because she wants to excel as a wife. She learns to share parenting duties with Jackie and Luke and tries to grow from stepmom to a real mom. It's an arduous task, deftly handled by Julia Roberts, despite its high Kleenex quotient.

## ▶ SUNSET BOULEVARD

DRAMA | 1950 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BILLY WILDER | CAST: GLORIA SWANSON, WILLIAM HOLDEN, ERIC VON STROHEIM

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## ▶ THELMA & LOUISE

DRAMA | 1991 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
RIDLEY SCOTT
CAST:
GEENA DAVIS, SUSAN SARANDON
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

It was just supposed to be a weekend getaway for two women, but ends up as a feminist awakening. In *Thelma & Louise*, Louise Sawyer (Susan Sarandon), an overworked Arkansas waitress, drives off with her best friend, bored housewife Thelma Dickinson (Geena Davis), in her 66 Thunderbird for a short holiday from dreary routine. But, en route, in the parking lot of a bar, Louise has to shoot down a rapist to protect Thelma. The two have no option but to flee, with a dogged cop (Harvey Keitel) pursuing them through the American heartland. Despite their troubles, the ride of the two friends is transformed into a joyous road trip, leading to their self-discovery and vengeance against a skewed society. Sarandon and Davis put their heart and soul into this strong and startling statement on female empowerment, even as Brad Pitt makes a memorable debut as a young hitch-hiker who takes the older women for a ride.

## ▶ VERA DRAKE

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
MIKE LEIGH
CAST:
IMELDA STAUNTON, PETER WRIGHT

It's the 1950s in London. The fallout of the war can still be felt and the have-nots are reeling under dire poverty. In such a grey world, Vera Drake (Imelda Staunton) seems an anachronism with her constant humming and singing and her desire to spread good cheer everywhere. So what if this also entails illegal abortions for Vera insists that she's only helping those poor girls who are victims of a regressive society that still forbids abortion. England legalised abortions only in 1967. So, unwed mothers, rape victims and mothers who couldn't afford to have another baby flocked to Vera for help. And the fact that she charged no money for services rendered made her a veritable hero in her community. Trouble begins when cops get wind of it and land up at her doorstep. Vera's happy family life is on the verge of collapse as she faces a prison charge. But, ultimately, what stands out in *Vera Drake* is the unflinching strength of a simple woman who is willing to even break the law if it means helping those who have nowhere to go. Staunton won accolades for her performance at numerous international film festivals.

## ▶ WAITING TO EXHALE

DRAMA | 1995 | ★★★½

Does a woman ever find her dream man? Or do the men – husbands and boyfriends – in a woman's life always suck. In

**DIRECTION:**
FOREST WHITAKER
**CAST:**
WHITNEY HOUSTON, ANGELA BASSET, LORETTA DOVINE, LELA ROCHON

*Waiting To Exhale*, four African-American women live lives of quiet desperation, hoping to find the perfect soul mate who would be good in bed and out of it. So, you have Savannah (Whitney Houston), a news broadcaster, who moves from male challenged Denver to Phoenix, hoping to settle down with the man she loves provided he actually leaves his wife, rather than just pillow talk about it. Her three girlfriends share a similar predicament: Gloria (Loretta Dovine) has given up on men and devoted all her attention to her son, Bernadine (Angela Basset) faces the trauma of being dumped by her husband who leaves her for a white woman and Robin (Lela Rochon) finds no takers because her successful businesswoman image seems to intimidate men. Love isn't always about perfection: that's the lesson the four friends learn in this compelling study of the male-female equation.

## ▶ WORKING GIRL

DRAMA | 1988 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MIKE NICHOLS
**CAST:**
HARRISON FORD, SIGOURNEY WEAVER, MELANIE GRIFFITH
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

In *Working Girl*, Tess McGill (Melanie Griffith) lists her assets: a head for business and a body for sin. Of course, she doesn't get to use her head too much – despite her bright ideas – in a corporate culture that typecasts secretaries as bimbettes. But when she discovers that her new boss, Katharine Parker (Sigourney Weaver), is about to steal one of her ideas, she knows it's time to strike, for the self-respect of all those nameless working women, forced to end up as being file pushers in a manipulative world. She poses as an executive and strikes a deal with Jack Trainer (Harrison Ford), a representative from a rival firm. It helps that the rep is attractive and responsive to her girlie charm ... *Working Girl* is a smart and zany comedy that cracks the myth about beautiful women versus brainy ones.

# 50 BEST SCI-FI FILMS

## ▶ 12 MONKEYS

SCI-FI | 1995 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
TERRY GILLIAM
CAST:
BRUCE WILLIS, MADELINE STOWE, BRAD PITT

Coming in the wake of the AIDS threat, Bruce Willis portends the eventual eradication of human race at the hands of a deadly virus. The subject is very topical. James Cole (Bruce Willis) is a time-traveller who skims across centuries and countries with amazing skill. Cole returns to the present from 2035 AD to forewarn the human race about its imminent doom. Labelled insane, he is sent to a mental asylum where he meets the delightful Dr. Kathryn Railey (Madeline Stowe) and psychotic troublemaker Jeffrey Goines (Brad Pitt). A victim of human engineering, Cole is about to become a mental wreck, but for the careful ministering of the psychiatrist and the nervous energy of Pitt. Engrossing fare, with a fine performance by Pitt who adds a new dimension to the character of the mentally challenged.

## ▶ 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

SCI-FI | 1954 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
RICHARD FLEISCHER
CAST:
KIRK DOUGLAS, JAMES MASCURTIS BENTON
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS.

Jules Verne's evergreen futuristic classic, *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*, finds a perfect celluloid adaptation in this Walt Disney production. Kirk Douglas and his buddies go hunting for the monster that has been destroying ships in the sea around San Francisco. They end up finding dreaded Captain Nemo (James Mason) and his fearful Nautilius, a nuclear submarine, that threaten to create havoc in the world. The film is a magnificent production with mind-boggling sequences of underwater drama created in an age when technology hadn't reached an evolved stage. But if Jules Verne could foresee a nuclear submarine in the 1800s, surely Disney could unleash a technological blitzkrieg before time.

## ▶ 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

SCI-FI | 1968 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STANLEY KUBRICK
CAST:
KEIR DULLEA, GARY LOCKWOOD
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST SPECIAL EFFECTS.

*2001: A Space Odyssey* can be hailed as the bible of sci-fi cinema. Stanley Kubrick's film doesn't capture space as a mere backdrop for some high-octane drama, replete with explosions, collisions and laser flashes. Instead, he presents space as it truly is: a limitless expanse that is mysterious, unexplained and infinitely beyond the grasp of human intellect. The film begins in pre-historic times when ape-men discover a huge black monolith shadowing their existence. As a consequence of this alien sighting, they arm themselves for the first time with weapons made out of animal bones. And as a weapon is flung into the expanse, the film shifts gears and enters the age of space travel. Civilization has dawned, but the menacing monolith is still there. This time, as a shadow under the lunar surface of the moon, sending strange signals to Jupiter. Two

astronauts (Keir Dullea, Gary Lockwood) set out towards Jupiter in a spaceship controlled by Hal 9000, a computer that goes berserk midway. It's time for man to tame the machine, but not before Hal fights back for survival. Space has never looked scarier – or seemed more beautiful– on the big screen, not even when our filmmakers have peopled it with strange aliens.

## ▶ A CLOCKWORK ORANGE

DRAMA | 1971 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STANLEY KUBRICK | CAST: MALCOLM MCDOWELL, PATRICK MAGEE

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## ▶ A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

SCI-FI | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST: HALEY JOEL OSMENT, JUDE LAW, FRANCES O'CONNOR

Somewhere in the not-so-distant future, the world is divided into mecha (mechanical) and orga (organic) beings. Into this world comes David (Haley Joel), a mecha boy, programmed to pitch in as the perfect son. With a few undecipherable words whispered into his fibre ears, he becomes the dream child any parent can hope for. But only as long as the orga child isn't around. Once the flesh and blood bundle of joy arrives, David becomes just an assemblage of optic and metal. His future? The flesh fair, where he will be cannibalized before hordes of ravenous humans, baying for the blood of robots. Do humans have a duty towards robots? Must they not reciprocate love for love, devotion for devotion? Spielberg raises a fundamental question about orga morals in a mecha world. Through the travails of David and his fruitless search for love and belonging in an inhuman human world, Spielberg creates a modern-day Pinocchio tale in *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*. Juxtaposed against young Haley's vulnerability is the swagger of Jude Law who plays a mecha gigolo.

## ▶ THE ABYSS

SCI-FI | 1989 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: JAMES CAMERON
CAST: ED HARRIS, MARY ELIZABETH MASTRANTONIO
AWARD: ONE OSCAR.

A nuclear sub suffers a mysterious power failure and hits the treacherous rocks in deep sea. Time for Bud Brigman (Ed Harris) and his crew of oil rig workers to go down, into the abyss, on a rescue mission. He is assisted by his estranged wife (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) who built the submarine oil rig that serves as the rescue vehicle. But the accident isn't the only exigency to be taken care of. Suddenly, the crew discovers strange neo-lit creatures from outer space sailing past them, even as an unforeseen hurricane cuts them off from their command ship and perilously extends their underwater sojourn. *The Abyss* is a chilling underwater thriller with great cinematography and special effects.

## ▶ ALIEN

SCI-FI | 1979 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: RIDLEY SCOTT | CAST: SIGOURNEY WEAVER, TOM SKERRITT

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## ▶ ARMAGEDDON

SCI-FI/ ADVENTURE | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
MICHAEL BAY
CAST:
BRUCE WILLIS, LIV TYLER, BEN AFFLECK

A giant comet, the size of Texas, is hurtling towards the earth and may spell doom. Who are the heroes this time? They are the most unlikely ones: a bunch of decrepit oil-drillers who are good only at drilling. Airlifted from the middle of the Pacific by NASA, these drillers are dismissed as a bunch of retards by snooty, upmarket experts. But the retards are the real heroes who agree to save the world for a few simple things. Like a life without taxes, a night in the White House and an insight on who actually killed Kennedy. And when they are not playing hero, they are fighting, loving and losing like humans. Without his state-of-the-art space suit, Bruce Willis is just an over-protective father who wants to keep his beautiful daughter, Liv Tyler, away from the renegade (Ben Affleck) on his ship. Warm, crackling relationships, edge-of-the-seat special effects and a witty screenplay make *Armageddon* engrossing fare.

## ▶ BACK TO THE FUTURE

SCI-FI | 1985 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROBERT ZEMECKIS
CAST:
MICHAEL J. FOX, LEA THOMPSON, CHRISTOPHER LLOYD
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Young Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) has a problem at hand. Like most teenagers, he'd like to teach his nerdy parents a few lessons so that his home wasn't dysfunctional and a drag. This teen fantasy actually comes true when he gets a chance to time travel and swing back from the 1950s to the 1930s, due to the invention of his friendly neighbourhood scientist, Dr. Emmett "Doc" Brown (Christopher Lloyd). With the push of a button, Marty finds himself sitting next to his father who was a fumbling teen in the 1930s. And soon he finds his mother too, but isn't prepared for this little time-twist: his mom starts having the hots for him, instead of his father. Time to push the button again? But not before you've had your laughs and thrills in this quirky adventure that defies conventional time-travel movies.

## ▶ BLADE RUNNER

SCI-FI | 1982 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: RIDLEY SCOTT | CAST: HARRISON FORD, RUTGER HAUER, SEAN YOUNG

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## ▶ CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF A THIRD KIND

SCI-FI | 1977 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
RICHARD DREYFUSS, FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT, MELINDA DILLON
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

So, we aren't really alone. George Lucas may have told the world this simple truth in the 1970s with *Star Wars*. But in *Close Encounters Of A Third Kind*, Steven Spielberg gave the ultimate science fantasy a whole new twist by bringing to the fore the benevolent face of the alien race. Despite flying saucers and unexplained red lights in the sky, the human race had nothing to be afraid. This simple truth, replete with scintillating special effects, is narrated through the experiences of three main protagonists: a power company worker (Richard Dreyfuss) who spots an alien spaceship one dark night, a distraught mother (Melinda Dillon) who believes her son has been abducted by aliens, and a dour scientist (Francois Truffaut) who facilitates the Earthlings first contact with visitors from stars. This is vintage Spielberg fare that sets the stage for *E.T.*, the blockbuster that made everyone want to adopt an alien as a pet.

## ▶ THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW

SCI-FI | 2004 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROLAND EMMERICH
CAST:
DENNIS QUAID, IAN HOLM, EMMY ROSSUM

Snowfall in New Delhi, hail in Tokyo, tornadoes in Europe and the Atlantic Ocean in Lower Manhattan ... Global warming and mankind's follies have caused big ice breakers in the Artic to melt and mix with the oceans. End result? Freezing cold waters sweep across cities and threaten to drown the Statue of Liberty as well, pushing the world on the brink of another Ice Age. In such a scenario, where the only place with sunshine is Mexico, a climatologist (Dennis Quaid) whose warnings on climate change have gone unheeded, must save his son from freezing to death. It's the topicality of *The Day After Tomorrow* – save the environment or perish – and the super special effects that make the film a must-see affair.

## ▶ DEEP IMPACT

SCI-FI/DISASTER | 1998 | ★★★½

Apart from being a disaster film, *Deep Impact* is about emotions as well. About dying, despair and an overriding desire for life. The world suddenly changes course one night when young Leo Biederman (Elijah Wood) turns his telescope to a remote corner of the sky. He discovers a strange light that turns out to be a

**DIRECTION:** MIMI LEDER
**CAST:** ROBERT DUVALL, TEA LEONI, MORGAN FREEMAN

comet, named Wolf-Beiderman, that scientists determine is on collision course with earth. The comet, 7 miles long and bigger than the Everest, threatens to wipe out Planet Earth, but for the American President (Morgan Freeman). Threatened with extinction, America joins hands with Russia to set up a special force. Former astronaut Spurgeon Tanner (Robert Duvall) commands the mission aboard spaceship Messiah. The crew has an arduous task ahead. It must travel through the comet's rocky layers, land on its violently erupting surface and plant nuclear charges so as to either break up the comet or change its orbit. The special effects are spectacular, specially the tidal wave that wipes out New York City and carries the head of the Statue of Liberty into the ocean depths.

## ▶ DEMOLITION MAN

SCI-FI | 1993 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** MARCO BRAMBILLA
**CAST:** SYLVESTER STALLONE, WESLEY SNIPES, SANDRA BULLOCK

*Demolition Man* begins in 1996 when fierce and violent cop John Spartan (Sylvester Stallone) is sent to a cryogenic prison for having caused unbridled mayhem while nabbing sadistic killer Simon Phoenix (Wesley Snipes). The killer too shares the same prison sentence. Jumpstart to 2032, the killer escapes and begins his deadly games again, plunging a crime-free city into chaos. The only deterrence lies with good cop Stallone, who needs to be pulled out of limbo and let loose, albeit with a pretty aide (Sandra Bullock) this time. A typical cops- and-robbers *masala, Demolition Man* scores only because of its high-octane action sequences, unleashed by a robotic Stallone, and the piquant charm of Sandra Bullock in her first recognizable foray in Hollywood.

## ▶ DR. STRANGELOVE OR HOW I LEARNED HOW TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB

COMEDY | 1969 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** STANLEY KUBRICK | **CAST:** PETER SELLERS, GEORGE C. SCOTT

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## ▶ E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

SCI-FI | 1982 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: HENRY THOMAS, DREW BARRYMORE, DEE WALLACE

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## ▶ ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND

ROMANCE | 2004 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MICHAEL GONDRY | CAST: JIM CARREY, KATE WINSLET

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## ▶ FANTASTIC FOUR 2: RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER

SCI-FI | 2007 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
TIM STORY
CAST:
IOAN GRUFFUDD, JESSICA ALBA, CHRIS EVANS, MICHAEL CHIKLIS

The superheroes are back and how! In the post 9/11 world, when all superheroes – Batman, Superman, Spiderman – are becoming introspective about their magical powers, the Fantastic Four are untroubled by existential woes. No dilemmas for them for they know they have to save the world from the inimical Dr. Doom with their special powers of stretchy limbs (Reed), electrical force fields (Storm), human torch infernos (Johnny) and sheer power (Ben). This time, the threat is doubled. On the one hand, there is the old foe, Dr. Doom (Julian McMahon), and on the other, there is Galactus, an intergalactic force that wants to gobble up the planets. Weird changes in earth's weather patterns and radioactive fields disrupt the wedding of super scientist Mr. Fantastic (Ioan Gruffudd) with the Invisible Woman (Jessica Alba). For, when the world begins to fall apart, the couple gets down to saving it. Their only hope is the Silver Surfer who has been sent to destroy the world. Grab your popcorns and enjoy your share of gape-and-gawk gizmology.

## ▶ THE FLY

SCI-FI | 1986 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
DAVID CRONENBERG
CAST:
JEFF GOLDBLUM, GEENA DAVIS
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Seth Brundle (Jeff Goldblum), an introverted scientist, tries to impress a news reporter (Geena Davis) with his new experiment. But he becomes a victim of his scientific genius and ends up as Brundlefly, a tragic mix between a human being and a fly. Can love save him from the squishy, bloody future that awaits him? *The Fly*, replete with horrific special effects, is an eclectic mix of science fiction masquerading under the guise of a romantic flick. Watch Goldblum mirror the anguish of a sensitive man who is gradually metamorphosing into a monster.

## ▶ FORBIDDEN PLANET

SCI-FI | 1956 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
FRED M. WILCOX
**CAST:**
WALTER PIDGEON, ANNE FRANCIS, LESLIE NIELSON

In *Forbidden Planet*, Space Cruiser C-57D is on a do-or-die mission. With Commander Leslie Nielson in charge, the cruise is headed for Altair-4, a desolate planet. This planet was the destination of a previous human expedition too and from its dangerous terrain most of the crew had disappeared. Nielson lands safely on the planet, only to find two survivors from the previous expedition, Dr Morbious (Walter Pidgeon) and his daughter Alta (Anne Francis). They live in this vast sea of loneliness with their servant Robby, a robot, who specialises in superhuman feats at the behest of his master, Morbious. But there's a sinister force operating insidiously in this technological Utopia and the surviving humans need to combat it with ingenuity. The special effects may not be state-of-the-art, but the drama makes this intergalactic mission milestone cinema, one that presaged *Star Trek, Star Wars* and the rest.

## ▶ FRANKENSTEIN

SCI-FI | 1931 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JAMES WHALE
**CAST:**
COLIN CLIVE, MAE CLARK, JOHN BOLES, BORIS KARLOFF

There have been several screen versions of Mary Shelley's classic, written in 1818. But critics consider the 1931 cinematic version of *Frankenstein* as the best in terms of the horror it evokes and the tragic import of man trying to play God. This film catapulted Boris Karloff as an international star with his chilling depiction of the monster that crazed scientist Frankenstein created after crudely assembling human body parts from corpses dug out from the graveyard. Karloff played the character three times in *Frankenstein, Bride of Frankenstein* and *Son Of Frankenstein*, but his first foray in 1931 is considered the best. The scene is which Dr. Henry Frankenstein, obsessed with creating human life, animates his monster in his isolated Bavarian castle remains unforgettable. A must for horror buffs.

## ▶ GODZILLA

SCI-FI | 1998 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ROLAND EMMERICH
**CAST:**
MATTHEW BRODERICK, JEAN RENO

Initially, it was supposed to be an ordinary lizard, but for the French who decided to test their atomic bombs in the South Pacific. End result? The tiny lizard mutated into Godzilla, a giant-sized iguana, who decided to take a touristy trip through Manhattan. And like all tourists, Godzilla too took the mandatory stops at Madison Square, Chrysler Building and decided to take a stroll through Central Park, crushing anything that came before him. With the entire US media and officers of the elite Special Forces chasing him, Godzilla has a veritable ball, playing hide and seek. Despite the brain dead story, go for the scintillating special effects and the larger-than-life drama.

## ▶ I AM LEGEND

SCI-FI | 2007 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
FRANCIS LAWRENCE
**CAST:**
WILL SMITH, ALICE BRAGA

A deadly virus wipes out the entire population in New York, leaving only two survivors: Will Smith and his dog, Samantha. The rest of the humans have mutated into flesh-eating vampires that hunt in packs when night falls. End result? You get one of the most outlandish scenes where lions hunt deer at Times Square and human beasts, in search of food, slip in and out of Central Park. Will Smith's lone ranger act is quite watchable, especially as the camera captures his routine as he talks to his dog, takes it out for a walk, talks to mannequins in shops and uses bookstores as his library. Also, he conducts his research to find a cure for the mutant virus that has vanquished mankind. In between, through the radio, he tries to reach out to others like him and combats predators who attack him. Suddenly, the filmmaker brings God into the proceedings and the religiosity angle tilts the film a bit off balance. Oops, when did God have to make a guest appearance in science fiction! So, just approach this as a horror film and be prepared to jump out of your seat when mutants attack.

## ▶ I, ROBOT

SCI-FI | 2004 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ALEX PROYAS
**CAST:**
WILL SMITH, BRIDGET MOYNIHAN

*I, Robot* is a hi-tech cops and robbers story inspired by Issac Asimov's sc-fi. While the robbers have been transformed into killer robots, the cop is technophobic Will Smith who remembers how his father was killed by a robot. Set in Chicago in 2035, the story begins with homicide detective Del Spooner (Will Smith) suspecting that a rogue robot, Sonny (voiced by British actor Alan Tudyk), may have killed its 'father', inventor Dr. Alfred Lanning (James Cromwell). US Robotics' CEO (Bruce Greenwood) and his robo-psychiatrist (Bridget Moynihan) are sceptical of his theory. They have solid business reasons to believe so, since the company is set to roll out new, more sophisticated prototype meant for every home in Chicago. Spooner's Luddite fears are dismissed by his supervisor and his grandmother because everybody believes that robots are benign machines, hard-wired never to harm humans and programmed to do menial work. But Spooner's fears aren't unfounded. Especially since a computer malfunction incites a robot rebellion in Chicago. They are on the rampage and only one guy can control them. You guessed right. Will Smith.

## ▶ INDEPENDENCE DAY

ACTION | 1996 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ROLAND EMMERICH

A perfect popcorn flick, *Independence Day* scores because of its super-special effects. These include blowing up the White House and the Empire State Building by a bunch of power-hungry

CAST:
WILL SMITH, BILL PULLMAN, JEFF GOLDBLUM
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

aliens who have Armageddon on their agenda. Even as the harried US President (Bill Pullman) promises the world a special show of fireworks on July 4, where the Earthlings hope to destroy the aliens, it is left to two guys to save the world. These are computer geek David Levison (Jeff Goldblum) and maverick pilot Steven Hiller (Will Smith) who have nothing on their side but sheer grit. Uncle Sam shows off his super power, and how!

## ▶ INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

SCI-FI | 1956 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
DON SIEGEL
CAST:
KEVIN MCCARTHY, DANA WYNTER

Disaster strikes in a small town when the Pod People deviously take over the human race. The aliens are a mean bunch that morph into humans whom they attack and begin to lead their lives, minus all emotions. The only man who can stop this hostile takeover is psychiatrist Dr. Miles Bennell (Kevin McCarthy), even as the body snatchers are hell-bent on taking over his body too. It's a nightmarish tale that supposedly reflected America's paranoia of communists in the 1950s. The film is indeed a chilling take on the future.

## ▶ JURASSIC PARK

SCI-FI | 1993 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: SAM NEILL, LAURA DERN, JEFF GOLDBLUM, RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH
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## ▶ MAD MAX

CRIME | 1979 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: GEORGE MILLER | CAST: MEL GIBSON, JOANNE SAMUEL
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## ▶ THE MATRIX

SCI-FI | 1999 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: LARRY AND ANDY WACHOWSKI | CAST: KEANU REEVES, LAURENCE FISHBURNE, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS
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## ▶ MATRIX RELOADED

SCI-FI | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
WACHOWSKI BROTHERS
CAST:
KEANU REEVES, LAURENCE FISHBURNE, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS

*Matrix Reloaded* scores on both levels: on the expanse and derring-do of its SFX theme and because of its philosophical view that explains why humans are the best. Being the only creations that cannot be controlled, humans have a decided edge over the rest. The quest of Neo (Keanu Reeves) for finding out the purpose of his existence becomes a centuries-old search that leads him to the Oracle as he tries to save his beloved Trinity and the last remnants of humanity in imperilled Zion. Visually engaging, *Matrix Reloaded* boasts of a classic fight sequence where Neo must combat multiple versions of Agent Smith.

## ▶ THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS

SCI-FI | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
WACHOWSKI BROTHERS
CAST:
KEANU REEVES, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS

Two nail-biting battle sequences and an Indian connection: these are three reasons why you must not miss *The Matrix Revolutions*, containing the final chapter, a teaser that pits illusion against reality. Reasons enough for all those Neo-wave addicts who have waited so long to find out the following: Neo *Kaun*? *Matrix Kya*? Does *The Matrix Revolutions* answer all these queries? Forget it. What's important is the philosophy behind the art of filmmaking, something which the *Matrix* series expound at length. Its action sequences and special effects, where the human body defies all laws of gravity, sound, speed and fatality, are matchless. In part three, the final battle between Neo and Agent Smith is another classic where 20 minutes of sheer power pounds across the screen. And when he's not fighting, Neo is busy taking his tutorials from representatives of the Oracle: an Indian family with an Indian heir to the omniscient Being. By promoting Sati as the Oracle's heir, the West again acknowledges India's spiritual leadership. Between these, there are long, didactic explanations on the future, past and present. But all you need to know is whether the human race survives or not. It does.

## ▶ MEN IN BLACK

SCI-FI | 1997 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BARRY SONNENFELD
CAST:
WILL SMITH, TOMMY LEE JONES
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

The aliens have arrived. But unlike popular myth, most of them are friendly refugees who are using New York as their hideout from mean intergalactic creatures. In *Men In Black*, agent Jay and agent Kay (Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones) are friendly neighbourhood cops working for a special government agency that keeps tab on these otherworldly visitors. This time, they have to track down an unfriendly new visitor (Vincent D 'Onofrio) from outer space. An intergalactic assassin, he is on a mission to destroy and kill. Great special effects, rib-tickling comedy and inspired performances by Smith and Jones ensure a perfect entertainer.

## ▶ METROPOLIS

SCI-FI | 1927 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
FRITZ LANG
**CAST:**
ALFRED ABEL, GUSTAV FROHLICH

Fritz Lang conceptualized *Metropolis* in 1927 but the film remains topical even today. It's a timeless tale of a futuristic hi-tech society, riddled with a class divide. In *Metropolis*, a powerful clique of industrialist tries to control an exploited working class that is desperate for someone to help them out. And their hope blossoms when the son of an elite city planner falls in love with a working class girl, Maria (Brigitte Helm). Leaving his luxurious home behind, Freder Fredersen (Gustav Frohlich) joins his girlfriend in the soul-killing sweatshops and is appalled by the misery of the working class. He tries to persuade his despotic father, Joh Fredersen (Alfred Abel), to go in for a more egalitarian society, but powerbrokers never like to relinquish their power, do they? Enter Evil Maria, a replica of Freder's saintly girlfriend, created in the sinister laboratories of the *Metropolis*. Her job is to sabotage the revolution and preserve the status quo. Chilling, dazzling, evergreen, Lang's future-shocker is a cult sci-fi film.

## ▶ MINORITY REPORT

SCI-FI | 2002 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:**
TOM CRUISE, MAX VON SYDOW, SAMANTHA MORTON

It's 2054 and there has been no crime in Washington DC for the past six years. That's because crime prevention has acquired a hi-tech form with the services of three elite pre-cogs. These are prescient cops who can foresee the crime and strike before it occurs. Trouble begins when two pre-cogs point the needle of suspicion at John Anderton (Tom Cruise), the third cop, who must now race against time to prove his innocence. In this hard-hitting, CGI dominated film, *Minority Report*, Steven Spielberg makes a powerful indictment of the future where privacy becomes a far cry, prying is part of state policy and technology gets precedence over humans. Watch out for the creepy-crawly "spyders", robotic eye scanners, that leave no room to hide.

## ▶ PLANET OF THE APES

SCI-FI | 2001 | ★★★½

It's circa 2029. Leo Davidson (Mark Wahlberg), an astronaut-in-training, stationed on a research lab travelling through space,

DIRECTION:
TIM BURTON
CAST:
MARK WAHLBERG, HELENA BONHAM CARTER

goes in search of a chimp that has disappeared in a space storm. He lands on a primate planet run by apes, some dignified (Senator Sandar, played with patrician grace by David Warner and the beautiful Ari) and some bloodthirsty (Tim Roth's General Thade, whose simian snarls make him the stuff of nightmares). Humans are second-class citizens and are rounded up by apes and sold as slaves. Davidson not only has to escape from this planet but also choose the love of his life. Should it be Daena, a human slave woman in loin cloth (played by model Estella Warren), or the kohl-eyed chimp Ari (Helena Bonham Carter) who defies fascist military honcho Thade to side with humans. The choice is difficult and the escape thrilling. Filmmaker Tim Burton has re-energized the sci-fi classic into an amazing adventure of the imagination, complete with a sinister, brooding contemplativeness that forms the core of his creativity.

## ▶ PLEASANTVILLE

SCI-FI | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
GARY ROSS
CAST:
TOBEY MAGUIRE, JEFF DANIELS, JOAN ALLEN

Pleasant is beautiful, but so are other things. Like silly, sexy and dangerous, believes Bud Parker and goes around introducing imperfections in a perfect world like *Pleasantville*, the television series that upholds the happy, well-adjusted Parker family that lives and loves in the 1950s. The family is a microcosm of the entire township where nobody cries. Where couples sleep on separate beds, youngsters express their love by merely holding hands and life flows uninterrupted. Contrast this to the real world, where broken families are the norm and breaking hearts is common. Nevertheless, this is a world of colours, dominated by dissent and free will. The ideal lies somewhere in between. An interesting hypothesis, relayed through adventures of David Wagner who is transported into his favourite tele-soap by a mysterious repairman who lends him a magical remote control. David and his ultra-hip sister, Jennifer, are trapped in Pleasantville. They must conform to new codes of behaviour, where self-denial is the first principle. The two try to introduce a dash of reality into their artificial environs. Pleasantville is soon divided into two kinds of inhabitants: living, breathing, coloured souls who have learnt to live by instinct, and black and white people kowtowing tenets of self-control and repression. And with change comes resistance, censorship and control. Engrossing fare, reminiscent of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

## ▶ PREDATOR

SCI-FI | 1987 | ★★★½

In a sure-fire recipe for some sizzling drama in *Predator*, Arnold Schwarzenegger is shown in combat with a mean, cannibalistic extra-terrestrial. Schwarzenegger is in great form as the US

**DIRECTION:** JOHN MCTIERNAN
**CAST:** ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, CARL WEATHERS

commander called upon to lead a combat team into the dense South American jungles. When he sees his team members ending up as skinned corpses, hanging from trees, he realizes that the enemy is more menacing than the bunch of terrorists who have abducted some South American officials. Most of the action takes place in the forest, since the alien predator prefers to live among trees. *Predator*'s highpoint are special effects and combat sequences where the elusive killer creates havoc.

## ▶ ROBOCOP

SCI-FI | 1987 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** PAUL VERHOEVEN
**CAST:** PETER WELLER, NANCY ALLEN

Detroit, dystopic and futuristic, is shown as a city where crime reigns and gangs are on the rampage, killing cops and holding innocent citizens to ransom. In *Robocop*, a maverick scientist comes up with a novel scheme to combat crime. He creates Robocop, a perfect, invincible cop who is partly human and partly machine. When a heroic officer (Peter Weller) is almost killed, his brain is fused with steel and the human parts are almost destroyed to create the perfect killing machine. But somewhere inside the suit of steel, there lives the man: a truth that his partner (Nancy Allen) soon finds out. Entertaining action fare.

## ▶ STAR WARS: A NEW HOPE

SCI-FI | 1977 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** GEORGE LUCAS | **CAST:** MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER, ALEC GUINNESS
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## ▶ STAR WARS V: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

SCI-FI | 1980 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** IRVIN KERSHNER
**CAST:** MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER

Although *Star Wars V: The Empire Strikes Back* is the second film that hit the screen after the legendary *Star Wars* in 1977, it is actually fifth in the sequel. It doesn't take off from where the first ended, except that the rebellion is still on and the rebels are on the run. More importantly, Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and maverick Hans Solo (Harrison Ford) have now become rivals

AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

for the hand of Princess Leia and end up separated in the war against Darth Vader. While Skywalker seeks refuge on the swampy planet, Dagobah, under the tutelage of Jedi master Yoda, Hans flees off with Leia to an asteroid field and tries to protect her from the Vader menace. With a darker tone, the promise of a do-or-die battle in the future and a canvas bursting forth with scintillating special effects, this sequel is serious sci-fi stuff.

## ▶ STAR WARS VI: RETURN OF THE JEDI

SCI-FI | 1983 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
RICHARD MARQUAND
CAST:
MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER

The intergalactic crusade must go on ... and so must the fun and games. Gone is the dark tenor of *The Empire Strikes Back*. In *Star Wars VI: Return Of The Jedi*, along with overtones of good versus evil war, you find the return of fizz, a characteristic of the first *Star Wars* film. However, the most spectacular are the made-to-order monsters that the rebels must counter, like Jabba the Hutt who has imprisoned the dashing Hans Solo or the scary desert monster made of sand and teeth. And most of the fun comes from trademark characters – Obi-Wan Kenobi, Chewbacca, Yoda R2D2, C-3Po – and their recognizable histrionics. Eventually, the heroics of humans, Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia and Hans Solo, carry this sequel through strange, unexplored lands that lend a whole new dimension to imagination.

## ▶ STAR WARS III: REVENGE OF THE SITH

SCI-FI | 2005 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
GEORGE LUCAS
CAST:
HAYDEN CHRISTENSEN, EWAN MCGREGOR, NATALIE PORTMAN

*Star Wars III: Revenge Of The Sith*, the last and final episode, isn't just about shooting stars and flying machines. It is an ethical take on good and evil, a political parable about conflict between democracy and totalitarianism. The film begins with the young, blonde archetypal WASP Jedi Knight, Anakin Skywalker. He is optimistic, brave, righteous and committed to justice, democracy and the Republic. His tutor and mentor, legendary Obi Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), sees in him hope for a future when the intergalactic war shall end, the dark side of the Force will be tamed and democracy shall reign. The film ends with Skywalker in the black metallic body suit of Darth Vader, the epitome of evil, which has been fused on him to hide his singed body and soul. The light sabre of his Jedi master has gouged out the last shreds of goodness from him. The film skillfully establishes the drift of Skywalker from Light into Dark. He crosses the line for two reasons: love for his wife and lust for power. In that sense, he becomes a tragic hero like Macbeth. The film is topical and has riveting special effects and sabre-fights.

## ▶ THE TERMINATOR

SCI-FI | 1984 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JAMES CAMERON
CAST: ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, LINDA HAMILTON

James Cameron's tryst with larger-than-life cinema, dominated by special effects, found fruition in this futuristic battle between humans and machines. Set in a post-apocalyptic world where humans have become subservient to machines, a killer cyborg, christened the Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger), arrives from the distant future into a wasted and decrepit L.A. He has been sent on a mission: the machines want him to change the future by taking care of an unborn child who would lead a revolt against the mighty machines. A menacing killing machine-like Schwarzenegger spends most of the reel time hunting down Linda Hamilton, mother of the unborn child. But before he eliminates the hapless mother, he must tackle Michael Biehn, a survivor of the nuclear holocaust, hell-bent on terminating the terminator. *The Terminator* has combat technology at its thrilling best.

## ▶ TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY

ACTION | 1991 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JAMES CAMERON | CAST: ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, LINDA HAMILTON, ROBERT PATRICK

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## ▶ TOTAL RECALL

SCI-FI | 1990 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: PAUL VERHOEVEN
CAST: ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, SHARON STONE

It's a futuristic world where you can also buy memories. And that's what Douglas Qaid (Arnold Schwarzenegger) does to cure him of his obsession with Mars. Qaid, an ordinary man, who works in a construction company and has a loving wife (Sharon Stone) doesn't feel settled in life. That's because he is plagued with memories of having visited planet Mars. Unable to visit the planet, he goes to a specialised travel agency that plugs him onto a machine and fills his mind with memories of a virtual Martian experience. And the fact that Mars is in the midst of a revolution, and a seductive, made-to-order brunette (Rachel Ticotin) is looking for some human company adds to the fun and games. Amazing special effects, visceral violence and Schwarzenegger in a refreshingly different role make *Total Recall* an interesting tryst with the future.

## ▶ THE TRANSFORMERS

SCI-FI | 2007 | ★★★★

In *The Transformers*, you get to know who lives on Mars. It's the Autobots and Decepticons, alien machines that can transform into any fantastic shape or form. And in case you want an ethical identity kit for our Bot civilization, it's quite easy to sift the good guys from the bad. The noble Autobots transform into

DIRECTION:
MICHAEL BAY
CAST:
SHIA LABEOUF, MEGAN FOX

glitzy autos while the evil Decepticons take any slimy shape: CD players, cell phones that can slip into corners and spy on you. The Bot civilisation has woes similar to the human race. They want domination and are on the prowl for a secret code that holds the key to survival of the human race. And the secret code lies with a college kid (LaBeouf) who has been trying to sell it on eBay while taking time off from romancing the college hottie. Soon, the intergalactic war reaches Planet Earth as the warring aliens grapple for the code. Autobots become the kid's guardian angels, transmuting into gizmo-laden getaway vehicles whenever he needs to escape, while the Decepticons wage war with Americans in Qatar, send the Pentagon into a tizzy. The machines are stupendous and the CGI effects are state-of-the-art.

## ▶ THE TRUMAN SHOW

SCI-FI | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
PETER WEIR
CAST:
JIM CARREY, LAURA LINNEY

A nightmarish account of the increasing intrusion of television into individual spaces, *The Truman Show* is a chilling indictment of the satellite invasion. Although he does not know, Truman Burbank (Jim Carrey) has been an indispensable part of every household since birth when he was adopted by television mogul Christof (Ed Harris). An unwitting star of a 24/7 documentary soap opera based on his life, Truman becomes a pathetic caricature of the 21st century man. Not only is Truman's life supervised by a Big Brother like peeping Tom – through concealed cameras—it is also broadcast to a world-wide audience. Truman lives in the immaculate planned community of Seahaven that is actually a gigantic set. Surrounding him are cheerful friends and family who, in effect, are all stage actors. Also, a television producer masterminds his romance. It is in this web of lies that Burbank hopes to build a spontaneous relationship, but fails. His girlfriend is spirited away to Fiji and his bid to escape is aborted. The story's innovative. And the message is Orwellian and almost prophetic.

## ▶ WAR OF THE WORLDS

SCI-FI | 2005 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
TOM CRUISE, DAKOTA FANNING

A group of extra-terrestrials try a hostile takeover of the world. They not only want to inhabit it, but also want to annihilate the human race. Okay, so *E.T.* has turned evil in the post 9/11 world. He visits Earth in giant tripods that bring down skyscrapers. Buildings collapse, people flee, and Tom Cruise ends up dust-laden like that familiar picture of a woman who escaped from the World Trade Centre on 9/11. And in case you don't really get the metaphor, there is young Dakota Fanning spelling out her fears when she asks her father (Tom Cruise): "Are they terrorists?" This is essentially Steven Spielberg post 9/11, even though *War Of The Worlds* is ostensibly an adaptation of H.G.

Well's classic that created a furore when it was first published in 1898. The film is essentially one man's attempt to save his family from predators. And all that he can use against these marauders are two grenades and a survivor's instinct. There are a whole lot of special effects, but this film isn't Spielberg's best.

## ▶ X-MEN

SCI-FI | 2000 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** BRYAN SINGER
**CAST:** HUGH JACKMAN, IAN MCKELLEN, FAMKE JANSSEN, PATRICK STEWART

In *X-Men*, a mutant Magneto (Ian McKellen) had survived the Nazi camps as a boy in Poland. Now, when the US government passes a diktat calling all mutants (humans with special powers) to register themselves, Magneto is filled with nightmares of the past. Is it the beginning of another age of intolerance, where humans would exploit and abuse mutants? Before his nightmare can become true, Magneto leads a resistance of mutantkind against humankind. And the only creatures who can stop him are X-Men, a band of human-friendly mutants, who believe in peaceful co-existence. Led by telepathic Professor X (Patrick Stewart), the trio of messianic mutants – Cyclops, Storm, Dr. Jean Grey – are joined by maverick Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) in the crusade against rogue mutants. Marvel Comics first foray into filmdom was peppered with great visuals and comic-book exuberance.

## ▶ X-MEN 2

SCI-FI | 2003 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** BRYAN SINGER | **CAST:** HUGH JACKMAN, HALLE BERRY
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# 50 BEST ACTION FILMS

## ▶ 300

ACTION | 2006 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** ZACK SYNDER
**CAST:** GERARD BUTLER, LENA HEADEY, RODRIGO SANTORO

Violence reaches a new high in this Hollywood film which transforms war into unadulterated gore. And *300* does it without losing its momentum. So, you see heads being decapitated and flying on screen and humans being impaled, chopped and *chutneyfied*. Though the tale is based around 480 BC, it works like a modern allegory. Three hundred Spartans – all white men – move into the battlefield to face the might of all of Asia – all brown-skinned – that has combined forces under the flag of Xerxes, a Persian King, who is not only shown as a barbarian but also as one who considers himself to be God. In short, Spartans are fighting for democracy while Asians are mystical, maniacal and anti-democracy. See the parallels? Forget the politics. Just sit back and see violence unleashed on screen.

## ▶ APOCALYPSE NOW

WAR | 1973 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA | **CAST:** MARLON BRANDO, MARTIN SHEEN, ROBERT DUVALL

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## ▶ APOCALYPTO

ACTION | 2007 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** MEL GIBSON
**CAST:** RUDY YOUNGBLOOD, RAMIREZ AMILCAR

*Apocalypto* has graphic scenes of decapitation, human hearts being pulled out, singed while they are still beating, heads and headless bodies rolling down in untidy piles ...There! We thought we'd tell it straight so that only those who can handle apocalyptical violence should view it. *Apocalypto* is a first-rate action film despite Gibson's attempts to position himself as an auteur filmmaker who wants to make 'meaningful' films about lost worlds and fading civilisations. Nah! There's nothing anthropological about *Apocalypto*. Essentially a jungle chase, it gravitates around one person (Rudy Youngblood), trying to escape from a bunch of cold-blooded killers of the Mayan dynasty. He relentlessly fights his assassins in the dense Amazonian forests. His motive? He wants to return to his family who is hiding in a cave, as marauders plunder and loot. In the

film, Gibson goes back in time to show how the insatiable greed of imperialist nations/civilisations preys upon smaller, peace-loving communities who would prefer to be left alone. Cinematically, it is Rambo roaming the jungle in pre-historic times.

## ▶ BLACK HAWK DOWN

ACTION | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: RIDLEY SCOTT
CAST: JOSH HARTNETT, EWAN MCGREGOR, TOM SIZEMORE
AWARDS: TWO OSCARS.

There is an alarming topicality about Ridley Scott's film, *Black Hawk Down*, which may be set in Somalia during the 1990s. Incidentally, the Battle of Mogadishu against Somali warlord Mohammed Farrah Aidid almost seems to mirror the US offensive against the Taliban. Handpicked fighters of Delta Force and the US Rangers form a compact combat company, comprising 160 men, 19 aircraft and 12 vehicles. They are supposed to assist the UN Peace-Keeping Force to clean-up battle-weary Somalia, torn by feuding warlords and famine. The company must undertake an hour-long mission, infiltrate a crowded market surrounded by hostile civilians and armed militia and arrest two lieutenants of the infamous chieftain. With two helicopters – they call them Black Hawks – down, 19 soldiers dead and a battle that drags on into the weary hours of night, Mogadishu becomes the US Army's biggest black spot after Vietnam. Troops not only suffered the highest casualty after Vietnam but also failed in their mission. The effective docudrama style of narration – no text, mostly sound – draws viewers straight into the battlefield.

## ▶ BLADE RUNNER

SCI-FI | 1982 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: RIDLEY SCOTT | CAST: HARRISON FORD, RUTGER HAUER, SEAN YOUNG
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## ▶ THE BOURNE IDENTITY

ACTION | 2002 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: DOUG LIMAN
CAST: MATT DAMON, FRANKA POTENTE, CHRIS COOPER, CLIVE OWEN

Meet Jason Bourne, a CIA assassin, who loses his memory after a failed mission where he is shot twice and found floating on the ocean. Although he doesn't remember his identity, he can make out that someone out there wants him dead. But he doesn't know that it's his own boss (Chris Cooper) who wants to tie up this loose end before things boomerang. Bourne seeks refuge in Paris with German drifter Marie Kreutz (Franka Potente), but there really is no place to hide for this former hit man. Robert Ludlum fans ended up a trifle disappointed with this screen version of *The Bourne Identity*. However, Matt Damon more than made up with his perfect delineation of the cold-blooded, ruthless killer who is actually a hero.

## ▶ BRAVEHEART

ACTION | 1995 | ★★★★

CAST:
MEL GIBSON, SOPHIE MARCEU, PATRICK MCGOOHAN
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

Through *Braveheart*, Mel Gibson pays tribute to legendary Scottish hero William Wallace. Leading his nation against England in circa 1300, Wallace exemplified a rare breed of patriots that refused to buckle down, even in the face of death. But *Braveheart* isn't as much history as an unadulterated action flick that raises war to the status of an epic drama. And if you thought there were just horses, soldiers and shoot-outs, there is romance too. The Scottish warrior charms the French wife (Sophie Marceu) of the English Prince simply by the way he looks at her. Soon, she is revealing state secrets to him, though he is widely regarded as England's enemy No. 1. *Braveheart* has a heady mix of intrigue, action and valour, making it simply irresistible.

## ▶ BROKEN ARROW

ACTION | 1996 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN WOO
CAST:
JOHN TRAVOLTA, CHRISTIAN SLATER

The military book calls a lost nuclear weapon a broken arrow. Here, there are two broken arrows which have been stolen by a renegade US Air Force officer, Vic Deakins (John Travolta), who wants to use them as weapons of revenge against his country which has failed to give him his due. Having been repeatedly passed over for promotion, he wants to undo the injustice and demands a compensation of $250 million or else he threatens to bomb one major American city. The only guy who can stop him is his ex-partner, Captain Riley (Christian Slater), and a pretty park ranger (Samantha Mathis). There's enough ammunition in this cat-and-mouse game to keep the clock ticking. More importantly, Travolta does a volte-face in *Broken Arrow* by shedding his hero's role for one of downright evil.

## ▶ CASINO ROYALE

ACTION | 2006 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
MARTIN CAMPBELL
CAST:
DANIEL CRAIG, EVA GREEN, MADS MIKKELSON, JUDI DENCH

His name is Bond. Craggy Bond! Brit critics insist that Daniel Craig is the Best Bond after Sean Connery. Our take? He's a no-chinks-in-my-armour Bond, a hard-balled player who can take hits without flinching. Bottom line? Craig's gritty and good, but Connery remains the best. In *Casino Royale*, Craig, as the new 007, has the arduous task of putting an end to global terrorism in just one flourish. He plans to choke off funds of terrorists by winning the blood money in a do-or-die game of poker. His opponent, Le Chiffre (Mads Mikkelson), is the international banker to global terrorists. Aiding Bond in his mission is the arrogant, uptight treasury agent, Vesper Lynd (Eva Green), who has been sent to manage finances in this high-stakes operation. But there's more to the insouciant female agent, for Bond finds true love on his very first mission and is even willing to resign. But Mr. Bond, who'll save the world if you settle down to mow

the lawn or prune rose bushes? So, there's heartbreak and cynicism that have become the hallmark of Bond movies ... All guts and grit, *Casino Royale* revitalizes the franchise that had begun to lose steam in a world of X-Men and Neophytes (*The Matrix* super tribe).

## ▶ CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON

ACTION | 2000 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ANG LEE
**CAST:**
CHOW YUN-FAT, MICHELLE YEOH, ZHANG ZI YI
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS.

*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is like a rich tapestry, with a 19th-century period backdrop, a wild maiden, a desert brigand, a virtuous woman warrior and a legendary martial arts hero with a historic sword. The film, with its mysticism and the magic of Oriental lore, took the West by storm. Primarily, a clash between tradition and modernity, the film traces the story of a girl who wants to break free from the binds of aristocracy, gender and society. She seems destined for a marriage of convenience, which will further her father's political career. Having secretly mastered martial arts, the wilful Jen (Zhang Zi Yi) flees in search of her desert lover, battling everyone who stands in her way. Aiding her is The Green Destiny, the legendary sword that she has stolen from the great warrior, Li Mu-Bai (Chow Yun-Fat). Pursued by Li Mu-Bai and his lissome companion, Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh), wildfire Jen is in stark contrast to Shu Lien. While Jen is ready to sacrifice everything – family honour, tradition, social norms – for freedom, the two senior warriors have spent almost a lifetime denying their emotions for honour and tradition. Watch Zi Yi's Flying Superwoman act as, with the finesse of a ballet dancer, she flies across roofs, runs in the air and leapfrogs over treetops.

## ▶ DESPERADO

ACTION | 1995 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT RODRIGUEZ
**CAST:**
ANTONIO BANDERAS, SALMA HAYEK

Sex and violence, the usual bugbears of mainstream cinema, become the scoring points in this curry western about a gunslinger embroiled in a local gang war. The violence in *Desperado* is almost artistic, with Antonio Banderas prancing down the highway against the golden sunset like a menacing lone ranger. He transforms an innocuous guitar into an armoury of lead and steel, sliding guns from his sleeves and shooting straight from the hip. And the man-woman chemistry is mesmerizing, right from the first encounter when Salma Hayek falls upon Banderas in the midst of a gun battle. The storyline is simple. Banderas, a musician, must give up his guitar for guns to avenge his girlfriend's death. His trail of vengeance leads him through the Mexican underworld where bullets fly fast and death comes cheap. *Desperado* has a perfect action score.

## ▶ DIE HARD

ACTION | 1988 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JOHN MCTIERNAN | CAST: BRUCE WILLIS, ALAN RICKMAN

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## ▶ ENEMY AT THE GATES

ACTION | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JEAN-JACQUES ANNAUD
CAST:
JOSEPH FIENNES, JUDE LAW, RACHEL WEISZ

*Enemy At The Gates* is a tale of sharpshooters, slugging it out in a ruined city on the banks of Volga in the 1940s, fighting for survival of the Soviet motherland. But it isn't a mothballed period film, with stock characters and stock responses. A modern-day tale, it's about conflict, killer-instinct, survival, love, heroes and ideology. All this is treated with the expertise of a thriller and a style that stands up to Steven Spielberg in *Saving Private Ryan*. The confrontations between Vassili Zaitsev (Jude Law), the Soviet sharpshooter, and Konig (Ed Harris), the Nazi sniper, thrill while they chill. Jean-Jacques Annaud treats the battle of Stalingrad with ingenuity, creating characters that are indomitable and individualistic. More importantly, he treats them with respect and sensitivity. If Vassili, a shepherd boy from Urals, grows into a larger-than-life hero, his enemy, Konig, the German sniper, has a dignity and integrity that almost make him a hero. And in between this game of death, there is impossible, imperishable love ... Not to be missed.

## ▶ ENTER THE DRAGON

ACTION | 1973 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROBERT CLOUSE
CAST:
BRUCE LEE, JOHN SAXON

Watch how Bruce Lee reached iconic status in *Enter The Dragon* and wowed the world with his exquisite display of Oriental martial arts. Unfortunately, Lee died soon after the film was released. *Enter The Dragon* evoked thunderous applause when it was released and Bruce Lee remains Hollywood's biggest import to date. Working as an undercover agent, hired by the British government to expose a drug dealer's criminal activities, Lee became the first Oriental answer to James Bond. But unlike 007, he only had his fists of fury to set the world right. The sole way he can nab the master criminal, Mr. Han, is by entering the

martial arts tournament hosted by him in an isolated island, off the Chinese coast. This becomes a perfect setting for different fighters to display their craft. Sit back and see Lee lead the brat pack of Oriental warriors.

## ▶ FACE/OFF

ACTION | 1997 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN WOO
CAST:
NICHOLAS CAGE, JOHN TRAVOLTA, JOAN ALLEN

Sean Archer (John Travolta) is a principled cop, a loving father and a responsible husband. He's a picture of righteousness in *Face/Off* that is in stark contrast to the crooked charisma of Castor Troy (Nicholas Cage). The quintessential sociopath, Castor lives a life of high crime, high passion and high risk. Trouble begins when Archer comes up with a novel way to nab the criminal who had killed his young son. A simple surgical operation sees Archer taking on the face of the terrorist, while his own face rests in saline: to be put on after the operation is over and the bombs have been defused. But smart and sassy Castor can't keep low, even if he has been sent into coma by the cops. He steals Archer's face, and tries to steal his life too in this compelling drama of good versus evil.

## ▶ THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS

ACTION | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROB COHEN
CAST:
PAUL WALKER, VIN DIESEL

Action. Adrenalin. Speed. There's a no-brainer kind of appeal in *The Fast And The Furious* that keeps you riveted despite the absence of a storyline and the predominance of red-hot metal, steel, biceps, tattoos, mini-skirts, leather jackets and gasoline. Set against the sub-culture of LA's street racing, the young and the restless meet in a gear-grinding drama of love and friendship. Brian, an undercover agent, infiltrates the raucous car-racer gang of Dominic Toretto, prime suspect for a series of truck hijackings. Brian must bring Dominic into the folds of law, but only if he can transcend his newfound friendship with him. Refreshingly, *The Fast And The Furious* does not fall into familiar cliques. Freedom and friendship do prevail over law. With loads of vroom and whirr, the film is for boys over five, 15 and 50. And for girls who love boys and their toys.

## ▶ FIGHT CLUB

ACTION | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
DAVID FINCHER
CAST:
BRAD PITT, EDWARD NORTON, HELENA BONHAM CARTER

Meet Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt), a New Age seer, with a strange brand of philosophy. He believes that it's only after we have lost everything that we are free to do anything. And the only way to acquire this rarefied state of freedom is to join his exclusive Fight Club where frustrated, anguished, cynical, lonely men pummel each other with bare hands to find nirvana. And it isn't long before he finds a willing recruit in Edward Norton, a depressed urban outsider, who is desperate for succour. A punchy critique

of the pressures of urban living, *Fight Club* is an unbridled display of male machismo, even as it lays bare the deadening effect of violence and the savagery of modern life.

## ▶ FIRST BLOOD

ACTION | 1982 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: TED KOTCHEFF
CAST: SYLVESTER STALLONE, RICHARD CRENNA

In the battlefield at Vietnam, John Rambo was invincible and indefatigable. So, he hopes life will treat him well when he returns home after the war as a hero. But what lies in store for him is exactly the opposite. Hounded and abused by the local police, Rambo declares a one-man war against small-town cops and their corrupt ways. He escapes from prison and seeks refuge in nearby jungles, hunting down his assailants – the infamous law-keepers who have made him an outlaw – with a small hunting knife and sheer physical might. With the police force down on their knees, the only man who can tame Rambo is his former army chief (Richard Crenna) who knows it will take more than guns and grit to overpower him. *First Blood* scores with its explosive action, exemplified by the sheer brawn of Sylvester Stallone.

## ▶ FULL METAL JACKET

ACTION | 1987 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: STANLEY KUBRICK
CAST: MATTHEW MORDINE, VINCENT D' ONOFRIO, LEE R EMERY

Out there in the battlefield, you need killing machines, not humans, believes Stanley Kubrick in *Full Metal Jacket*. This war drama unfolds at two levels. First, it lays bare the bestiality of war by showcasing the military's indoctrination techniques that are meant to de-humanize people. And second, it depicts the plight of young GIs as they battle for survival – and sanity – in the killing fields of Vietnam. *Full Metal Jacket* opens with Sergeant Hartman's gruelling training schedule. He has the task of transforming young, sensitive draftees into hard-boiled, trigger-happy soldiers. Later, they are let loose in Vietnam, with nothing to defend them except their animal instincts. The brutality of it all is viewed through the eyes of Private Joker (Matthew Mordine), a smart, young recruit, who mirrors the moral degradation of America's worst military debacle.

## ▶ GLADIATOR

ACTION | 2000 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: RIDLEY SCOTT | CAST: RUSSELL CROWE, JOAQUIN PHOENIX, CONNIE NIELSON
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## ▶ GOOD FELLAS

ACTION | 1990 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MARTIN SCORSESE

Based on Nicholas Pileggi's book, *Wiseguys*, *Good Fellas* is the real-life story of Henry Hill (Ray Liotta), an Irish-Italian youngster,

**CAST:**
ROBERT DE NIRO, JOE PESCI, RAY LIOTTA, LORRAINE BRACCO
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

who grew up as a foot soldier in New York, and later denounced it by switching sides. When the lure of the underworld diminished and the seamy side of mindless violence left him disillusioned, Hill joined the US government's Witness Protection Program. He helped the law to catch up with his old comrades: the avuncular man who stole for the love of it, Jim Conway (Robert De Niro), and the amiable killer who couldn't get a hold on his temper, Tommy Devito (Joe Pesci). With characteristic expertise, Martin Scorsese documents the highs and lows, the power and the pulpy morals of the Mafioso.

## ▶ THE GREAT ESCAPE

THRILLER | 1969 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN STURGES
**CAST:**
STEVE MCQUEEN, JAMES GARNER, RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH

Hailed as one of the most thrilling war dramas, *The Great Escape* features a bunch of POWs who try to escape from Stalag Luft III, a Nazi prison camp, famous for its impenetrable security. The prison has an odd assortment of prisoners, hailing from different countries, who bond due to their resolute desire to escape. With unflagging zeal, they begin their mission that includes forging their documents and building a tunnel through the fortified prison camp. But once they make their way through the tunnel, their situation becomes more perilous as they flee across hostile German territory, towards freedom. While all key characters are memorable, it is Steve McQueen who towers with his devil-may-care attitude and his motorcycle escapade. He crash-lands in a mesh of barbed wire, resulting in his capture. What remains imprinted in the viewer's mind is the picture of McQueen tossing a baseball on his captors' face: a final act of bravado, signifying freedom of the human spirit. Great thrills, great action, great fun.

## ▶ INDEPENDENCE DAY

ACTION | 1996 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ROLAND EMMERICH
**CAST:**
WILL SMITH, BILL PULLMAN, JEFF GOLDBLUM
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

A perfect popcorn flick, *Independence Day* scores because of its super-special effects. These include blowing up the White House and the Empire State Building by a bunch of power-hungry aliens who have Armageddon on their agenda. Even as the harried US President (Bill Pullman) promises the world a special show of fireworks on July 4, where the Earthlings hope to destroy the aliens, it is left to two guys to save the world. These are computer geek David Levison (Jeff Goldblum) and maverick pilot Steven Hiller (Will Smith) who have nothing on their side but sheer grit. Uncle Sam shows off his super power, and how!

## ▶ JURASSIC PARK

SCI-FI | 1993 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** STEVEN SPIELBERG | **CAST:** SAM NEILL, LAURA DERN, JEFF GOLDBLUM, RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH

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## ▶ KILL BILL VOLUME 1

ACTION | 2003 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: QUENTIN TARANTINO | CAST: UMA THURMAN, LUCY LIU, DAVID CARRADINE

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## ▶ KUNG FU HUSTLE

ACTION | 2004 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
STEPHEN CHOW
CAST:
STEPHEN CHOW AND HIS KICK-BUTT GANG

Now, why would an unknown film with unknown actors create such a hustle? *Kung Fu Hustle* grossed $66 million in Asia and $82 million worldwide. That's because in the film, you get to see some of the most amazing fight sequences that are comic, operatic and devastating. And all this from people who hardly look like martial-arts masters. Unless you think a down-and-out waster is The One. Appearances are deceptive, for a fat, foul-mouthed matronly woman, with bedroom slippers, has a lion's roar that can dismember your body while a balding, pajama clad, pot-bellied man is the famous Toad – he can fly in the air and fling you to death. The plot of *Kung Fu Hustle* is simple. Set against the backdrop of a slum in 1930s Shanghai, the film traces the attempts of a lowbrow thief, Sing (Stephen Chow), to masquerade as the mean boss of the Axe Gang. He has to face the fury of the real Axe Gang that tries to decimate Sing and the slum that harbours him. And when they can't do it themselves, they hire an assassin who is a kung fu master. But the master meets his match in the oddball ageing couple that rules the slum and the petty crook turns out to be Buddha's chosen one.

## ▶ THE LAST SAMURAI

ACTION | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ED ZWICK
CAST:
TOM CRUISE, KEN WATANABE

Period drama. Pulsating canvas. Epic intentions. Yet, it's not Akira Kurosawa. Set in Japan during the 1870s, *The Last Samurai* traces the adventures of Captain Nathan Algren (Tom Cruise), an American military officer, who has been hired by the Japanese Emperor to train the country's first army in modern warfare. Nathan, a cynic who loves the bottle more than the gun, sees this as an opportunity to make some extra bucks and, half-heartedly, begins his job. But a bloody encounter – and capture – by a rebel Samurai faction marks the beginning of his

transformation. The Yankee realises there's more to the Samurai cult than the sword. His 'conversations' with Katsumoto (Ken Watanabe), the last Samurai, teach him lessons he has never learnt before. And before Japan can drift blindly into modernity, it finds in Tom Cruise one more upholder of its code of honour, valour and excellence. Cruise turns his back on his country and becomes an American Samurai. With its great action sequences, moody picture frames and a gritty juxtaposition of modern artillery against the bushido blade, *The Last Samurai* may not have won Tom Cruise an Oscar nomination, but it is an impressive addition to his filmography.

## ▶ LEON THE PROFESSIONAL

THRILLER | 1994 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: LUC BESSON | CAST: JEAN RENO, GARY OLDMAN, NATALIE PORTMAN

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## ▶ LETHAL WEAPON

ACTION | 1987 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: RICHARD DONNER
CAST: MEL GIBSON, DANNY GLOVER

They are polar opposites, yet they must resolve their differences to work as a crack team to nab a ruthless gang of drug dealers across southern California. And it's the chemistry between the two cops – sober homebody Danny Glover and suicidal rebel Mel Gibson – which makes *Lethal Weapon* much more than a cops-and-robbers film. Glover, a family man, who doesn't like to take unnecessary risks, is dismissive of Gibson, a manic cop, who doesn't care whether he lives or dies after his wife's death in a car accident. Gibson, on his part, is scornful of Glover's studied approach towards life and crime. But by the end of their edgy mission that involves nerve-wracking car chases, deadly shoot-outs, do-or-die hostage situations, the two men end up as buddies for life. The high testosterone partnership of Gibson and Glover saw the birth of a successful franchise that kicked up a storm in four films.

## ▶ LORD OF THE RINGS: FELLOWSHIP OF THE RINGS

ACTION | 2001 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: PETER JACKSON | CAST: ELIJAH WOOD, SEAN ASTIN, VIGGO MORTENSON, IAN MCKELLEN

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## ▶ THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

ACTION | 1960 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: JOHN STURGES

The 16th-century Samurai warriors of Japan metamorphose into gun-slinging cowboys in this great American western that was an adaptation of Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*. Unlike most

CAST:
YUL BRYNNER, ELI WALLACH, STEVE MCQUEEN, CHARLES BRONSON, ROBERT VAUGHAN, JAMES COBURN

adaptations, *The Magnificent Seven* not only proved faithful to the original but also carried the warrior cult forward. This it did through the unbridled valour of seven vigilantes who are called upon to protect a small Mexican village from a bunch of marauders. Even as the thugs – 35 of them, led by Eli Wallach – present a compelling picture of evil, the seven sentinels are individual heroes bound by a common cause. Having acquired a cult status, *The Magnificent Seven* has been adapted in almost all languages. A classic tale of outsiders, the conflict of good versus evil makes for great viewing.

## ▶ THE MATRIX

SCI-FI | 1999 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: LARRY AND ANDY WACHOWSKI | CAST: KEANU REEVES, LAURENCE FISHBURNE, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS

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## ▶ MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

ACTION | 1996 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BRIAN DE PALMA | CAST: TOM CRUISE, JON VOIGHT, EMMANUELLE BEART

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## ▶ PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL

ACTION | 2003 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
GORE VERBINSKI
CAST:
KEIRA KNIGHTLEY, ORLANDO BLOOM, JOHNNY DEPP

Great fun. See the *Black Pearl* stealing through the black night on the black ocean, ready to send its pirates on a midnight escapade before the looting begins. Watch Johnny Depp's histrionics as Captain John Sparrow, the swashbuckling pirate. Yes, there are Keira Knightley's lustrous locks too to affect the susceptible. An adventure in the old-fashioned fairy tale mode, *Pirates Of The Caribbean* is a love story set against the high seas where evil Captain Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush) kidnaps the governor's daughter to cure himself and his crew of the curse that transforms them into skeletons every moonlit night. The daughter is saved by her Prince Charming (Orlando Bloom) who is a pirate too. But the film's real hero is Johnny Depp. His Captain Sparrow is the most charming rogue you've come across, ever since they stopped making those Wow Westerns.

## ▶ PLATOON

ACTION | 1986 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: OLIVER STONE | CAST: TOM BERENGER, WILLEM DAFOE, CHARLIE SHEEN

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## ▶ PULP FICTION

ACTION | 1994 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: QUENTIN TARANTINO | CAST: JOHN TRAVOLTA, UMA THURMAN, BRUCE WILLIS, SAMUEL L. JACKSON

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## ▶ RAGING BULL

DRAMA | 1980 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MARTIN SCORSESE | CAST: ROBERT DE NIRO, CATHY MORIARTY, JOE PESCI

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## ▶ RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

ACTION | 1981 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: HARRISON FORD, KAREN ALLEN, PAUL FREEMAN

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## ▶ ROCKY

ACTION | 1976 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JOHN AVILDSEN | CAST: SYLVESTER STALLONE, TALIA SHIRE

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## ▶ SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

WAR | 1998 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: TOM HANKS, MATT DAMON, TOM SIZEMORE

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## ▶ SIN CITY

ACTION | 2005 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
FRANK MILLER, ROBERT RODRIGUEZ
CAST:
BRUCE WILLIS, MICKEY ROURKE, JESSICA ALBA

Based on Frank Miller's book on the highs and lows of life in the fictional hell-hole, Basin City, this is film noir at its startling best. Combining comic book visual art with vintage noir, *Sin City* is a bold, brash and breathtaking anthology of violence where Mickey Rourke, a key character, warns: "It's going to be blood for blood, and by the gallon." These are the old days, the bad days, the all-or-nothing days. The underbelly of urban life is exposed through three stories where Bruce Willis plays an angst-ridden cop framed for raping the girl (Jessica Alba) he has pledged to protect, Mickey Rourke hell-bent on avenging the murder of a prostitute and Clive Owen, faced with the dilemma of an ex-detective trapped between the law and a bunch of lawless hookers. Go for the extreme experience: extreme violence, extreme degradation, extreme angst and extreme impact.

## ▶ SPEED

ACTION | 1994 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** JAN DE BONT
**CAST:** KEANU REEVES, SANDRA BULLOCK, DENNIS HOPPER
**AWARDS:** TWO OSCARS.

Hop aboard this bomb-on-a-bus thrill ride and feel your adrenalin rev up as LAPD daredevil Jack Travern (Keanu Reeves) tries to save a busload of passengers across the busy streets of L.A. Earlier, he had saved some hapless citizens, trapped in an elevator by a manic killer (Dennis Hopper). So, with his messianic credentials already established, the brazen cop has a field day displaying his bravado when the killer strikes again. He has a feisty co-passenger (Sandra Bullock) to partner him through the nerve-wracking ride. In the end, it's Reeves who rides home safe, defusing the bomb while the ill-fated bus cruises through traffic jams, half-built freeways without losing speed, even for a second. No story, sheer action, *Speed* is an uncluttered tryst with high-tension thrills and chills.

## ▶ SPIDER-MAN

ACTION | 2002 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** SAM RAIMI | **CAST:** TOBEY MAGUIRE, KIRSTEN DUNST, WILLEM DAFOE
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## ▶ STAR WARS: A NEW HOPE

SCI-FI | 1977 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** GEORGE LUCAS | **CAST:** MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER, ALEC GUINNESS
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## ▶ TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY

ACTION | 1991 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** JAMES CAMERON
**CAST:** ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, LINDA HAMILTON, ROBERT PATRICK

Single mother Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) may be in a mental institution, but she knows the end of the world is near and the rise of the mean machines will ensure Armageddon for the hapless human race. The only hope for survival lies with her young son, who has been separated from her and is living under foster care. But the machines have learnt the truth and are hell-bent on snuffing out the last human hope ... unless an old, battered, lesser evolved terminator robot, T-800 (Arnold

AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

Schwarzenegger), turns saviour and protects the mother and son from T-1000, the super-tech menacing marauder, made up of liquid metal. Awesome special effects, coupled with adrenalin-pumping confrontations between good machine versus bad machine, ensure edge-of-the-seat thrills.

## ▶ THIN RED LINE

ACTION | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
TERENCE MALIK
CAST:
SEAN PENN, WOODY HARRELSON, NICK NOLTE

Terence Malik, known as the 'J.D. Salinger' of films, is a near-mythic Harvard graduate, Rhodes scholar, former journalist and philosophy professor who had exiled himself from Hollywood for nearly two decades after making *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*. He returns in *Thin Red Line* with the screen adaptation of James Jones' novel about men in Charlie Company, an army battalion that is sent to capture a Japanese base on an island in the South Pacific, during the battle of Guadalcanal in World War II. But *Thin Red Line* isn't an ordinary anti-war film. Unlike Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*, a gut-stirring film that brings the battlefield right onto the screen, *Thin Red Line* uses images and metaphors to convey the horror. The green island, where man and nature lived in perfect harmony, is torn apart by bombs and bullets. While young soldiers seek out plausible reasons to justify death and destruction, they find none for war is against life, family and nature. *Thin Red Line* conveys a great message, albeit artistically.

## ▶ TOP GUN

ACTION | 1986 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
TONY SCOT
CAST:
TOM CRUISE, KELLY MCGILLIS, VAL KILMER
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Five weeks at the American Navy's prestigious Fighter Weapon's School where two young pilots are part of an elite corps being trained to be the best jet fighter pilots provides a perfect setting for daredevilry in the sky. Add to this a brush of romance between the astrophysics instructress (Kelly McGillis) and the ace fighter (Tom Cruise) in *Top Gun*. The sub-text of friendship, competition, rivalry and psychological trauma adds to the magnificent machismo. Watch out for Cruise in complete control as he storms the screen with steamy aerodynamic displays and cocky terra firma romance.

## ▶ THE TREASURE OF SIERRA MADRE

ACTION | 1948 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN HUSTON
CAST:
HUMPHREY BOGART, WALTER HUSTON, TIM HOLT

*The Treasure of Sierra Madre* unfolds as a stirring road adventure that is as rugged as the terrain it explores. The plot revolves around three gold prospectors who set out in search of treasure in the tough Mexican desert. But though the three begin as buddies, they end up as bloodthirsty rivals. The film is a stunning portrayal of moral degradation and human greed. Humphrey Bogart, who excelled as the all-American hero, does

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AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR.

a riveting volte-face in his compelling portrayal of Fred Dobbs, a churlish panhandler with questionable morals. He wants to do away with his comrades and run off with the treasure, once the three of them strike gold. Essentially a psychological study of the effect of greed on the human psyche, *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* is gripping.

## ▶ THE WILD BUNCH

ACTION | 1969 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: SAM PECKINPAH | CAST: WILLIAM HOLDEN, ERNEST BORGNINE

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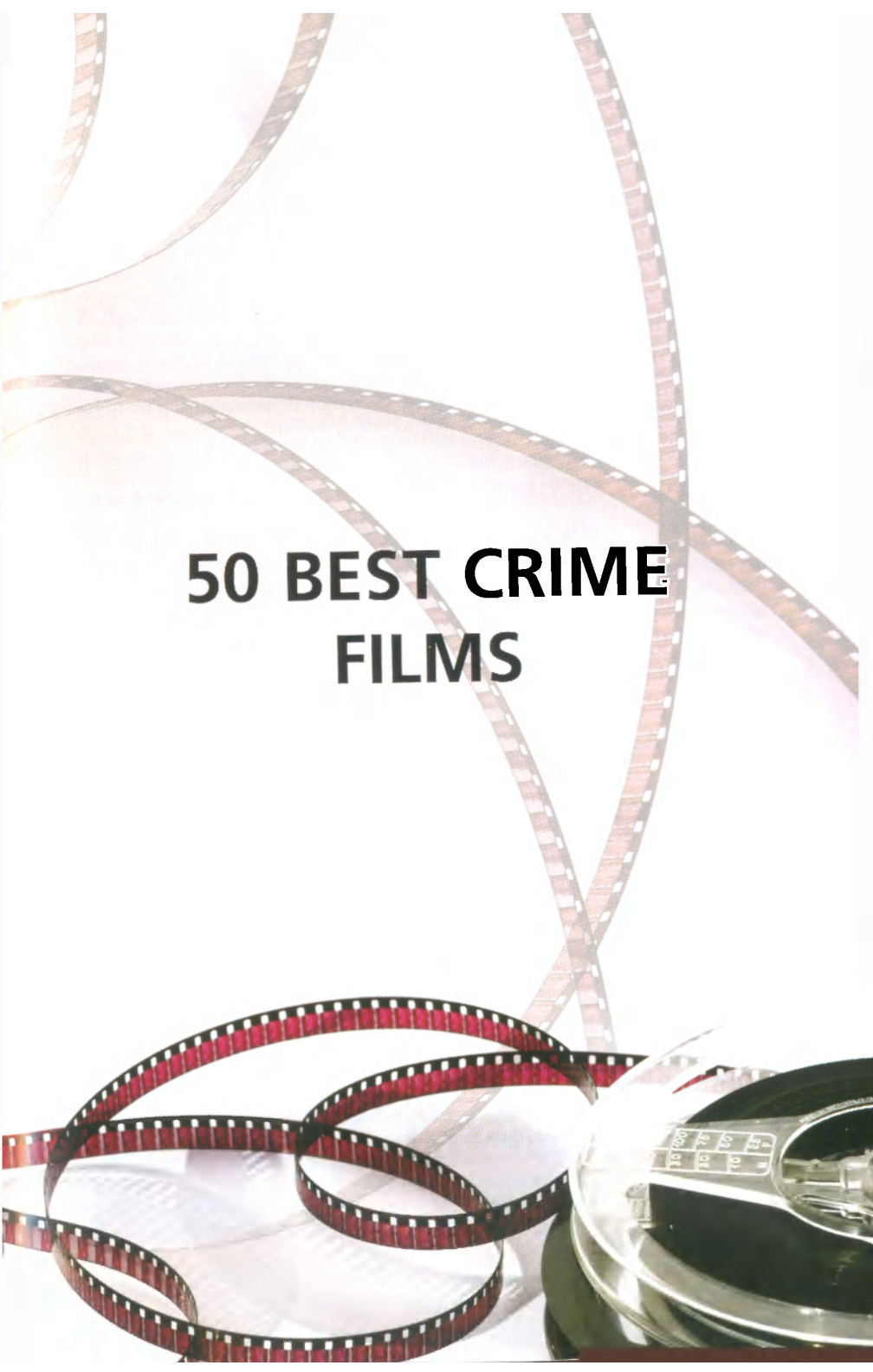
## ▶ X-MEN 2

SCI-FI | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BRYAN SINGER
CAST:
HUGH JACKMAN, HALLE BERRY

Forget about the universe. What preoccupies most viewers is the multi-universe and creative imagination. *The Matrix* (of popular entertainment) has been reloaded with mutants, wizards and machines calling the shots. Like all sci-fi films, *X-Men 2* scores in its special effects. The storyline is inconsequential and is a mere two-liner: two gangs of mutants fight for control and the US President (a Bush clone) falls in the line of fire. So, you have patriotic mutants and terrorist mutants and no prizes for guessing who wins the war against terror! Watch the film for the 'gawk quotient': Mystique changing form; Wolverine battling bad guys; Storm raising a storm; Jean propelling supersonic jets with a mere look; Nightcrawler infiltrating the White House and Magneto lording over them all with his demonic grin.

# 50 BEST CRIME FILMS



## ▶ A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

CRIME | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
DAVID CRONENBERG
**CAST:**
VIGGO MORTENSON, ED HARRIS, MARIA BELLO

Is Tom Stall (Viggo Mortenson), a peaceful small-town man, actually Joey Cusack, a ruthless killer from Philadelphia? Can a man escape from his past, scarred by a history of violence? Is it impossible for a prodigal to return to the fold and absolve himself of crime? David Cronenberg analyses this ethical dilemma in *A History Of Violence*. In the film, Viggo Mortenson is portrayed as a simple man – a perfect husband, an ideal father – who becomes the town's hero when he shoots down goons who enter his diner. Toasted for his valour on television, the unwilling hero soon finds his uneventful life take a dramatic twist when gangster Ed Harris lands at his door, branding him a killer on the run. Watch Mortenson desperately hang on to his sanity and family in this riveting thriller.

## ▶ AMERICAN GANGSTER

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
RIDLEY SCOTT
**CAST:**
DENZEL WASHINGTON, RUSSELL CROWE

In *American Gangster*, Frank Lucas (Denzel Washington), the black mobster who ruled New York in the 1970s, is the central character. Lucas, who endured privations and violence during childhood, grows up to become the driver and handyman of a criminal. After his death, Lucas takes over and expands the empire vastly by smuggling heroin from Vietnam in coffins of American war heroes. A man of paradoxes, Lucas is violent and ruthless, yet he's a doting family man and a benign godfather to the black community in Harlem. Almost invincible, he's bought over three-fourths of the law enforcement agency. But all his wealth and entrapments fail to lure the doughty, dogged and honest cop, Richie Roberts (Russell Crowe), who pursues him relentlessly. The usual cops-and-robbers drama acquires a new dimension here due to scintillating performances by Denzel Washington and Russell Crowe. The two don't confront each other often, but when they do, there are fireworks.

## ▶ BLACK RAIN

CRIME | 1989 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
RIDLEY SCOTT
**CAST:**
MICHAEL DOUGLAS, ANDY GARCIA, KATE CAPSHAW, KEN TAKAKURA

Two NYPD cops (Michael Douglas and Andy Garcia) battle crime in distant Osaka, after being pitted against Yakuza, the Japanese underworld, which swears by the cult of death. *Black Rain* opens with a motorcycle chase across New York expressway where Douglas arrests a Japanese criminal who has to be deported to Japan. But instead of turning him over to the Japanese cops, Douglas mistakenly hands him over to his gang members, disguised as cops. The beleaguered NYPD officer has no option but to outsmart the Yakuza and re-capture the gangster with the help of his deputy (Andy Garcia), his Japanese counterpart (Ken Takakura) and an American bar girl (Kate Capshaw) who seems to have all the information on the Osaka

underworld. Cut to the bike chase again, this time in a derelict steel mill, where the killers begin to close in and the only thing that can see them through is American valour. *Black Rain* is a routine cops-and-robbers drama that acquires new dimension because of its attention to visuals. Osaka never looked more menacing while the world of crime appears joyless and bleak. Watch *Black Rain* for its accentuated style quotient.

## ▶ BLOOD DIAMOND

THRILLER | 2006 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
EDWARD ZWICK
**CAST:**
LEONARDO DICAPRIO, JENNIFER CONELLY, DJIMON HONSOU

Leonardo DiCaprio brings to life Danny Archer, a diamond smuggler, who doesn't give a damn about human rights, humanity and humaneness as long as he makes a killing amongst the killing fields (read, diamond mines of Africa). Set in Sierra Leone, *Blood Diamond* is a gripping political thriller that lays bare the harsh and violent reality of the TIA (This Is Africa) syndrome. Danny, who smuggles diamonds in bodies of goats, ends up in prison after an aborted mission. Here, he meets Solomon Vandy (Djimon Honsou), a simple fisherman, who has been separated from his family by the rebels and has found a pink diamond while working in the mines for them. Danny wants the diamond and Solomon wants his family. The two strike a deal that can only fructify if the pretty journalist (Jennifer Conelly) helps them reach the disputed territory where the diamond is buried. *Blood Diamond* is racy, gory and pop politics at its best.

## ▶ CAPE FEAR

THRILLER | 1991 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN SCORSESE
**CAST:**
ROBERT DE NIRO, NICK NOLTE, JESSICA LANGE

A deep-seated grouse and an overriding mission drive Max Cady (Robert De Niro) in *Cape Fear*. Having served a 14-year-long prison sentence after being convicted for rape, Cady emerges from prison determined to take revenge on his lawyer, Sam Bowden (Nick Nolte), who, he feels, failed to do a good job as his defense attorney. And Cady isn't an ordinary criminal. He employs ingenious methods of vengeance. Instead of physically intimidating the lawyer, he prefers to psychologically traumatize him by stalking him and threatening his family. In a chilling sequence, Cady impersonates a drama teacher and tries

to befriend Bowden's teenage daughter who seems to be smitten by him. A remake of the 1962 thriller, *Cape Fear* boasts of a compelling performance by Robert De Niro. Though playing a negative role, De Niro's compelling as an unscrupulous man, hell-bent on seeking redressal for the wrong done to him.

## ▶ CARLITO'S WAY

CRIME | 1993 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** BRIAN DE PALMA
**CAST:** AL PACINO, SEAN PENN, PENELOPE ANN MILLER

Carlito's way weaved its treacherous path through the wicked underbelly of the New York drug mafia, making redemption almost an impossible dream for this Puerto Rican gangster who wanted to turn clean. After being released from prison with the help of his lawyer friend (Sean Penn), Carlito Brigante, known as the J.P.Morgan of smack business, decides to give up drug trafficking and set up a car rental business in the Bahamas. However, his dream of an honest life with his girlfriend (Gail) isn't easy to translate into reality, since crime has a nasty habit of never letting go. Watch Pacino and Penn effortlessly conjure up some screen magic.

## ▶ CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:** LEONARDO DICAPRIO, TOM HANKS

Catch Steven Spielberg in a breezy mood in *Catch Me If You Can* as he recreates the real-life crime saga of conman Frank Abagnale Jr. (Leonardo DiCaprio). Frank sails through America's high life, forging high-denomination cheques and glibly impersonating a Pan-Am pilot, a doctor and a lawyer. But he meets his nemesis in FBI agent Carl Hanratty (Tom Hanks), who pursues him with single-minded zeal. At 17, Frank becomes a successful bank robber, apart from being a master of deception and fraud. But Frank isn't exactly a bad guy. You could blame it on his broken home which caused him to run away when courts asked him to decide which parent he wanted to stay with. He couldn't decide and never stopped running. Ironically, Frank finds a surrogate father figure in Carl, whom he meets and converses with every Christmas. And it is Carl who eventually saves him from ruin. The crook became an agent, helping the FBI detect difficult cases of forgery. It's the crackling chemistry between Hanks and DiCaprio that lends sparkle to *Catch Me If You Can*.

## ▶ CHINATOWN

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** ROMAN POLANSKI | **CAST:** JACK NICHOLSON, FAYE DUNAWAY, JOHN HUSTON

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## ▶ DAY OF THE JACKAL

THRILLER | 1973 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
FRED ZINNEMANN
CAST:
EDWARD FOX, TONY BRITTON

It's the summer of '63. A group of Frenchmen want a presidential change and hire a professional killer, code-named Jackal (Edward Fox), to assassinate Charles de Gaulle. Simple, stylish and engaging throughout, this is a compelling celluloid adaptation of Frederick Forsyth's popcorn thriller. The lure of *Day Of The Jackal* primarily lies in Edward Fox's portrayal of the smooth, yet cold and clinical killer who works with precision to accomplish the task. Armed with an unconventional sniper's gun, two disguises, three identities and a passport in the name of a child who died in 1931, the Jackal is a deadly mix of charm, intelligence and ruthlessness.

## ▶ THE DEPARTED

THRILLER | 2006 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MARTIN SCORSESE | CAST: JACK NICHOLSON, LEONARDO DICAPRIO, MATT DAMON

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## ▶ DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

CRIME | 1997 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
TAYLOR HACKFORD
CAST:
AL PACINO, KEANU REEVES

Think Al Pacino: think perfection. In *Devil's Advocate*, he plays the role of Satan. But Pacino's Satan is hardly the despicable character portrayed in the Bible. Full of fire and brimstone, Satan aka John Milton claims to be the lord and master of the 20th century. "You must agree, the 20th century belongs to me," he declares, even as he dismisses God as "a sadist, a prankster and an absentee landlord". Superficially, he heads a prestigious law firm that juggles truth for clients, worldwide. In reality, he is the sovereign head of a world that rests on ambition, greed and sensual appeasement. Allegorically, *Devil's Advocate* works skillfully, highlighting that crucial juncture when every individual has to make a choice between right and wrong. Kevin Lomax (Keanu Reeves), a smart, young attorney, has a yen for winning. No matter how repugnant the crime, how guilty the defendant, Lomax with his clean looks and gift of the gab convinces the jury and wins freedom for his clients. He is not

only successful professionally but also has a happy married life. How far is Lomax ready to go for success-at-all-costs? His initiation into the big, bad, bustling metropolis (New York), under the tutelage of a Godfather-like John Milton, reflects the dilemma of the modern man.

## ▶ DIRTY HARRY

ACTION | 1971 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: DON SIEGEL | CAST: CLINT EASTWOOD, HARRY GUARDINO, ANDREW ROBINSON

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## ▶ DOG DAY AFTERNOON

CRIME | 1975 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
SIDNEY LUMET
CAST:
AL PACINO, JOHHNY CAZALE
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

The bank heist should have taken just 10 minutes. But it ended up as one of the longest afternoons in New York as the media decided to cover it live and transform it into one big voyeuristic circus. More importantly, the robbers and hostages decided to grab their 15 minutes of fame and played up to the gallery with flashy histrionics. Based on a real-life heist, *Dog Day Afternoon* presages the media explosion and boasts of a high-on-drama act by Al Pacino as the street-smart, ex-Vietnam soldier-turned-robber who desperately wants money for a sex-change operation of his homosexual partner.

## ▶ DOUBLE INDEMNITY

CRIME | 1944 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BILLY WILDER
CAST:
FRED MACMURRAY, BARBARA STANWYCK

Is there anything called the perfect murder? Not really, but that's a truth MacMurray finds out a bit late in *Double Indemnity*. Meant to be a perfect crime, a wife (Barbara Stanwyck) lures her lover into murder. She convinces him to kill her husband so that they could walk away with the insurance money. And the unlawful act seems even more enticing since they plan to pass off the murder as an accidental death from a moving train. For this, they would grab a double indemnity from the gullible insurance agency. But love can be wicked and insurance agents can be smart and nosey. The film's evil, yet entertaining.

## ▶ EASTERN PROMISES

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
DAVID CRONENBERG
CAST:
VIGGO MORTENSON, NAOMI WATTS, VINCENT CASSEL

*Eastern Promises* is a reworked version of *The Godfather*. The Italian mafia has been replaced by the Russian mafia which has spread its tentacles in London, so the Corleone family has given way to the Vory V Zakone clan, headed by an avuncular restaurateur and his renegade son (Vincent Cassel). So who's Mikey (Michael Corleone)? It's Nikolai (Viggo Mortenson), the driver who may not be the real son of the Mafia Boss (Armin Mueller-Stahl), like Mikey, but ends up as the inheritor. Trouble

brews when a midwife (Naomi Watts) delivers a baby and gets hold of the diary of the 14-year-old Russian mother who dies during childbirth. While seeking out the little foundling's father, Watts uncovers a scandal that not only tears the family apart but also changes the hierarchy. Nikolai, the driver, turns out to be much more than the mob's handyman and silently works his way to the top. The narrative structure is fascinating, shot in typical David Cronenberg style, brooding and intense. But what stands out is the minimalist acting by Viggo Mortenson. Who would believe that he isn't Russian. Da?

## ▶ FARGO

THRILLER | 1996 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: JOEL AND ETHAN COEN | CAST: WILLIAM H. MACY, STEVE BUSCEMI, FRANCES MCDORMAND

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## ▶ THE FRENCH CONNECTION

THRILLER | 1971 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: WILLIAM FRIEDKIN | CAST: GENE HACKMAN, ROY SCHEIDER, FERNANDO REY

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## ▶ THE FUGITIVE

THRILLER | 1993 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ANDREW DAVIS
CAST:
HARRISON FORD, TOMMY LEE JONES, JULIANNE MOORE
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Dr. Richard Kimble (Harrison Ford) may be innocent, but the law doesn't think so. Convicted and arrested for his wife's murder, he becomes a fugitive when an accident enables him to escape from the police van that was ferrying him to prison. Relentlessly chased by the never-say-die cop, Tommy Lee Jones, the doctor is determined to prove his innocence and find his wife's real killer. Not an easy task, specially when Tommy Lee Jones is a punctilious cop and doesn't give up the chase, even for a minute. It's an out-an-out thriller, with nothing to tax your mind. Just sit back and join the chase.

## ▶ GANGS OF NEW YORK

CRIME | 2002 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
MARTIN SCORSESE
CAST:
LEONARDO DICAPRIO, DANIEL DAY-LEWIS, CAMERON DIAZ

*Gangs Of New York* is a classic that traces the birth of America, not in civilised boardrooms, but through bloody street brawls and hate crimes. Scorsese rips up sanitized postcards of American history and reassembles them into a violent, blood-soaked story of a bare-knuckled past. The New York it portrays between 1840s and the Civil War is, as a character observes, "the forge of hell", in which groups of people clear space by killing their rivals. The film opens with an extraordinary scene set in catacombs, carved out of Manhattan rocks, where a leader of the immigrants gang –Irish-American Priest Vallon (Liam Neeson) – prepares for battle. With his young son,

Amsterdam (Leonardo DiCaprio), he walks through the labyrinth, gathering his forces, the Dead Rabbits, before stalking out to fight a rival American-born gang, the Nativists. In this animalistic battle, Vallon is slain by his enemy, William Cutting aka Bill the Butcher (Daniel Day-Lewis). Amsterdam disappears into an orphanage, only to emerge as an avenging angel, hell-bent on revenge. He joins Bill's gang and rises in its rank to become almost like Bill's foster son, till it is time to strike. In this brilliant canvas, the lynchpin is Day-Lewis, upstaging co-stars DiCaprio and Cameron Diaz, as Bill the Butcher, a terrifying psychopath. Martin Scorsese's film is revisionist history, linking the birth of American democracy with American crime.

## ▶ THE GODFATHER

DRAMA | 1972 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA | CAST: MARLON BRANDO, AL PACINO, DIANE KEATON, JAMES CAAN

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## ▶ GOOD FELLAS

ACTION | 1990 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MARTIN SCORSESE | CAST: ROBERT DE NIRO, JOE PESCI, RAY LIOTTA, LORRAINE BRACCO

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## ▶ THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

WESTERN | 1966 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: SERGIO LEONE | CAST: CLINT EASTWOOD, ELI WALLACH, LEE VAN CLEEF

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## ▶ HEAT

THRILLER | 1995 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MICHAEL MANN | CAST: ROBERT DE NIRO, AL PACINO

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## ▶ THE INSIDER

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
MICHAEL MANN
CAST:
RUSSELL CROWE,
AL PACINO

*The Insider* is a reel drama about real-life hero Jeffrey Wigand (Russell Crowe), who drew the ire of the powerful tobacco lobby when he decided to go public about the dubious business policies of Browe and Williamson. But more than this, *The Insider* is about truth and its vulnerability in an age of big bucks and burgeoning power. The intimidation begins at the outset. Crowe is chucked out of his job, forced to flee to nondescript suburbs, threatened by faceless intruders who put bullets in his mailbox and, eventually, his wife and family desert him. He encounters these travails for sticking his neck out for the truth.

But terror escalates when the truth is censored and suppressed by the very same newsmen who were earlier hounding him for the story. CBS business locks horns with CBS news and his interview is aborted. Why? Because CBS business gains more by lobbying with the tobacco lobby than by upholding the truth. So what if its star reporter (Al Pacino) digs in his heels and cries "Liar Liar"? Powerful stuff.

## ▶ INSOMNIA

CRIME | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
**CAST:**
AL PACINO, ROBIN WILLIAMS, HILARY SWANK

*Insomnia* is no ordinary thriller though it follows the familiar format of a chase between a cop and a psychopath, guilty of murdering a 17-year-old schoolgirl. The film has the cold, bleak landscape of an Alaskan town where the sun never sets and fog keeps creeping in through the rugged terrain. The chill seems to waft out from the screen and envelop the viewer as Pacino stumbles through the marshlands of moral ambiguity, chasing the killer through the fog. He ends up shooting a fellow cop with whom, of late, he has not had cordial relations. Was it an accident? Al Pacino is unable to tell, even as he desperately covers up his crime and continues with the manhunt. It would have been okay, except for the sunlight that keeps filtering through the blinds and doesn't let him sleep. The sunlight becomes a metaphor for the call of conscience. Add to this his engagement with the quixotic killer (Robin Williams) who feels he is just a soul mate of the cop – "We both have killed even though we did not want to kill," he says – and Pacino's dementia almost reaches breaking point. In this bleak wasteland, the only ray of hope is the young cop (Hilary Swank) who hero-worships the old cop. With its power-packed portrayals, high drama and an uncomfortable chill, *Insomnia* has shades of Dostoevsky.

## ▶ THE KILLING

CRIME | 1956 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STANLEY KUBRICK

Here's a $2 million racetrack robbery that goes awry. Ex-con Sterling Hayden plans a meticulous heist which entails a hold-up on the racetrack in the seventh race. He has four

**CAST:**
STERLING HAYDEN, COLLEEN GREY, VINCE EDWARDS

accomplices: a staid cashier, a racketeering cop, a reformed alcoholic and a track bartender. But the best-laid plans often go awry, especially when one of the robbers has a wife with questionable morals. *The Killing* is considered Stanley Kubrick's breakthrough film. With its taut direction and documentary style drama, the film catapulted him centre stage in Hollywood.

## ▶ L.A. CONFIDENTIAL

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
CURTIS HANSON
**CAST:**
KEVIN SPACEY, RUSSEL CROWE, GUY PEARCE, KIM BASINGER
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

*L.A. Confidential* belongs to the director solely, for Curtis Hanson creates celluloid gold out of James Ellroy's novel about the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) blues. With a cast of fine actors, and a style that is reminiscent of the noir-ish '50s, Hanson takes a hard look at tensions within the LAPD and the bustling city with its high-powered people. *L.A. Confidential* follows the misfortunes of three Los Angeles cops as they try to trace the link between various murders. Adding spice to the proceedings are the diverse working styles of the three cops. Jack Vincennes (Kevin Spacey), who works as a part-time advisor to *Hush-Hush* magazine, is an easy-going cop who operates in the realm of moral ambiguity. Bud White (Russell Crowe), a conscientious daredevil, hates violence against women and Ed Exley (Guy Pearce), the department's blue-eyed cop, who works strictly in accordance with rules and, predictably, brushes people the wrong way. Throw in a series of unprecedented events – a police riot, a decomposed body in a basement, a dangerous liaison – plus a sensitive eye for detail and *L.A. Confidential* ends up as perfect crime drama.

## ▶ MAD CITY

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
COSTA-GAVRAS
**CAST:**
JOHN TRAVOLTA, DUSTIN HOFFMAN, MIA KIRSHNER

*Mad City* is an engrossing look at the other side of the news story. Here, reality is subtly twisted for the sake of sensation and economics rather than ethics. The victim, Sam Baily (John Travolta), is a simple person, whose demand is basic. Having been summarily dismissed as a security guard at the local Museum of Natural History, Sam is forced to take drastic steps to ensure his family's welfare. When his attempts to reason with his boss fail, he picks up the nearest gun, packs a few sticks of dynamite, and holds a group of children hostage, until he is reinstated. An accident during the hostage drama ends up in a shoot-out where Sam's friend is shot. Reason enough for various people to descend there – the FBI, cops, the media, media magnates, voyeurs, weirdos and passers-by. Sam becomes a household name, with his exploits figuring prominently on global networks. Everybody wants to use Sam to further their interest, including TV reporter Max Bracket (Dustin Hoffman) who has been sidelined from the arc lights by his scheming partner. But unlike the rest, Max sees through the farce,

empathizes with Sam's disconcerting vulnerability and tries to portray the truth. A compelling film.

## ▶ MAD MAX

CRIME | 1979 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GEORGE MILLER
**CAST:**
MEL GIBSON, JOANNE SAMUEL

When Max Rockatowsky (Mel Gibson) made his screen debut, he was initially treated with slight disdain, but it didn't take long for the yet-unknown Mel Gibson to elevate the angry, edgy Aussie cop to cult status. In *Mad Max*, Gibson battles crime in a dystopian future where uncivilized packs of humans prey on milder and peace loving members of their species. Max too would have loved to live peacefully, but for a bunch of violent goons who kill his wife and child after a car chase that sees their gang member end up in a body bag. After that, it's purely a game of vengeance, where our daredevil cop rides through the Australian desert and hunts the killers with ruthless glee. The recklessness of manic Max, coupled with action set pieces, go a long way in making the *Mad Max* trilogy riveting, high on adrenalin.

## ▶ THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE

THRILLER | 1962 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN FRANKENHEIMER
**CAST:**
FRANK SINATRA, LAURENCE HARVEY, JANET LEIGH

*The Manchurian Candidate*, a political thriller that seemed to have predicted the age of political assassinations, was so powerful that it was suppressed for almost 25 years after the death of John F. Kennedy. Thematically, the film almost pre-dated the Kennedy assassination with its plot of an American soldier who is brainwashed by the Communists into becoming an assassin. After the Korean War is over, the American soldier (Laurence Harvey) returns home a war hero, but only after he has been subjected to a Chinese experiment on hypnotism. This has subconsciously turned him into a killer who can be let loose anytime. The only man who can stop him is his former buddy (Frank Sinatra) who has somehow escaped unscathed from the dubious experiment. The film boasts of one of the first martial arts action sequences, long before Bruce Lee entered the dragon and made chopsocky a cult.

## ▶ MARATHON MAN

CRIME | 1976 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN SCHLESINGER
**CAST:**
DUSTIN HOFFMAN, LAURENCE OLIVIER, ROY SCHEIDER

Graduate student Babe (Dustin Hoffman) is the marathon man, a long-distance runner who would like to be left alone with his early morning jogs and his drab academia in uneventful New York City. But when his brother (Roy Scheider), who works for a strange government agency, dies mysteriously, life takes a bizarre turn for Babe. He is drawn into direct confrontation with a diamond smuggler (Laurence Olivier), an ex-Nazi, who will do anything, even kill, for his million-dollar cache of diamonds

hidden in a New York safe-deposit box. And it is only Babe's training as a marathon runner that will see him through this ordeal with death and violence. *Marathon Man* is a brainy teaser that will keep you engrossed by its unexpected twists and turns.

## ▶ MEMENTO

CRIME | 2000 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
**CAST:**
GUY PEARCE, CARRIE ANNE MOSS

*Memento* almost ended up redefining the crime thriller with its stylized narrative structure and its non-linear story-telling technique. The revenge tale keeps the viewer on his toes as the murder takes place in the opening reels and the rest is a succession of enigmatic fast-forwards and flashbacks. Insurance claims investigator Leonard (Guy Pearce) survives the gruesome night when his wife is raped and murdered with just one motive: revenge. But he's suffering from short-term memory loss that makes it difficult for him to remember the sequence of events that led to the crime. He uses body tattoos, Polaroid snapshots and Post-it notes to keep a record of events and suspects. Inscribed backwards on his body are the words: 'John G raped and murdered my wife.' Whenever Leonard looks into the mirror, he reads the horrific truth and sets out with grim determination to track his wife's killers. Intelligent fare.

## ▶ MISERY

CRIME | 1990 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ROB REINER
**CAST:**
KATHY BATES, JAMES CAAN
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (KATHY BATES).

In *Misery*, watch Kathy Bates transform this run-of-the-mill drama into scintillating fare with her power-packed portrayal of a deranged fan who gives a whole new meaning to idol worship. Bates is a lonely ex-nurse who lives in an isolated house with nothing to keep her company except the travails of Misery Chastain, heroine of a series of books by her favourite author, James Caan. Her lonely life takes a dramatic turn when she rescues Caan from a serious accident and brings him home to recuperate. But is this really a rescue? Caan soon finds that he's being held captive by his obsessive fan who wants him to change the end of his latest novel or bear the brunt of her fury. Kathy is absolutely menacing as the seemingly mild-mannered nurse who breaks bones easier than she heals them.

## ▶ OCEAN'S ELEVEN

CRIME | 2001 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SODERBERGH
**CAST:**
GEORGE CLOONEY, BRAD PITT, ANDY GARCIA, MATT DAMON

Danny Ocean's gang of casino busters operate like a dream team. Not only are they adept at their work but they also team up perfectly to carry off the most improbable heists. And if that's not tantalising enough, there's the ruthless, elegant Terry Benedict (Andy Garcia) who is awesome with his dapper, deadpan expression and killer instincts. As Las Vegas' biggest player (he owns the grandest casino), he makes a formidable

enemy for the Eleven. Trying to rob him is no child's play. And robbing him requires a masterly touch. *Ocean's Eleven* has a racy pace and cutting-edge action. While the direction is superb, the acting is a class act. And despite the predominance of action and adventure, the interplay of emotions is riveting.

## ▶ ON THE WATERFRONT

DRAMA | 1954 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: ELIA KAZAN | CAST: MARLON BRANDO, ROD STEIGER, EVA MARIE SAINT

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## ▶ PRIMAL FEAR

CRIME | 1996 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: GEORGE HOBLIT
CAST: RICHARD GERE, LAURA LINNEY, EDWARD NORTON

You don't know, you don't ask, you don't care... you just do the job, believes high-profile defense attorney Martin Vail (Richard Gere), commenting on the issue of guilt and innocence. Yet, the jaded cynic gets a case that transforms him as a person. He takes a conscience call while defending a 19-year-old chapel boy (Edward Norton) who has been accused of murdering one of the most popular bishops of Chicago. The case becomes a crusade for Gere, firing him with zeal to defend the poor, innocent underdog. But in *Primal Fear*, it is the underdog who steals the show. In this courtroom drama, Edward Norton packs a punch in his portrayal of the angst-ridden orphan.

## ▶ PULP FICTION

ACTION | 1994 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: QUENTIN TARANTINO | CAST: JOHN TRAVOLTA, UMA THURMAN, BRUCE WILLIS, SAMUEL L. JACKSON

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## ▶ REAR WINDOW

HORROR | 1954 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: ALFRED HITCHCOCK | CAST: JAMES STEWART, GENE KELLY

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## ▶ RESERVOIR DOGS

THRILLER | 1992 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
QUENTIN TARANTINO
CAST:
HARVEY KEITEL, TIM ROTH, MICHAEL MADSEN, STEVE BUSCEMI

Quentin Tarantino's debut film, *Reservoir Dogs*, went on to establish his signature style: a guts and gore cinema that unapologetically explores the world of crime. A gang of robbers takes refuge in a warehouse after a jewellery heist goes horribly wrong and ends in the death of one of them. "There's a mole in our midst," declares one of them and soon the suspicion shifts from one person to another. Suspicion and distrust stir up a storm in the claustrophobic hideout, while the law comes knocking on the door. The drama is tense, the violence visceral and the narration stylish while *Reservoir Dogs* unfolds through gritty flashbacks. Highly recommended.

## ▶ ROAD TO PERDITION

CRIME | 2002 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
SAM MENDES
CAST:
TOM HANKS, PAUL NEWMAN, JUDE LAW
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

While Dad keeps a rosary with his gun, the son's favourite subject in class is Bible history. Dad (Tom Hanks), a gangster, never flinches while pulling the trigger for his boss (Paul Newman) while the son becomes a bank robber when he's just 12. Strange tales of strange times: the infamous Capone-years in America's underworld when normal was boring and crooked was the norm. When it comes to building bonds and unraveling twisted ties of human relationships, *Road To Perdition* follows a different note. The sad bonding between Paul Newman and Tom Hanks who has to send contract killers for Hanks, his favourite, is best left to the viewer's imagination. Hanks desperation to save his son from impending doom and his newfound bonding with him are conveyed through monosyllabic refrains. Perdition refers to the gangster's fate ("We are all murderers here, no one gets to heaven," says Newman) and also to a small town in Kansas where Hanks hopes to find a haven for his son. Watch *Road To Perdition* for its scintillating performances.

## ▶ SCARFACE

CRIME | 1983 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BRIAN DE PALMA | CAST: AL PACINO, MICHELLE PFEIFFER, ROBERT LOGGIA

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## ▶ SEVEN

CRIME | 1995 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
DAVID FINCHER
CAST:
BRAD PITT, MORGAN FREEMAN, GWYNETH PALTROW

It's just seven days to retirement for detective William Somerset (Morgan Freeman). Seven peaceful days, hopes the detective who seems to have had his fill of New York City and its soaring crime graph. Ironically, it turns out to be the most action-packed week of his career, with the body count beginning from the first day. Somewhere, a psychopath has decided to play God

and enunciate the seven deadly sins through his grisly handiwork. It takes all the expertise of Somerset to seek him out, with the help of Dante, Chaucer and Mills. He also needs the help of the new kid on the block, detective David Mills (Brad Pitt), who is cocky, brash and ready to step into Somerset's shoes. A dark thriller that is teasing and intense, *Seven* is enticing fare.

## ▶ THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

THRILLER | 1991 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JONATHAN DEMME | CAST: ANTHONY HOPKINS, JODIE FOSTER

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## ▶ SLEUTH

THRILLER | 1972 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ
CAST:
LAURENCE OLIVIER, MICHAEL CAINE

Based on Anthony Shaffer's engrossing play, *Sleuth* is essentially a confrontation between Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine who are embroiled in a gripping mind game. In this, death is the penalty and one-upmanship the only weapon to survive. From the moment the film opens, as guest Caine walks through a labyrinth to meet his host, Olivier, waiting patiently at the centre like a spider for his prey, the drama sustains its nervous tension. It has the viewer sitting on the edge as he tries to keep pace with the insidious show of deceit and treachery. And the aspect of class conflict – Caine is a barber who falls in love with the upper-class snob, Olivier's wife – makes *Sleuth* a hard-hitting satire on social mores and prejudices.

## ▶ THE THIRD MAN

THRILLER | 1949 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
CAROL REED
CAST:
JOSEPH COTTON, ORSON WELLES, ALIDA VALLI
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Orson Welles is renowned for his legendary portrayal of *Citizen Kane*, but experts insist that the full power of his genius explodes in *The Third Man*. This post-war adaptation of Graham Greene's novel about greed and treachery is cinema at its best. Welles' portrayal of devilish Harry Lime, a profiteer, who makes money by dabbling in death – he peddles doctored penicillin that causes the death of countless children – remains one of the most chilling pictures of evil on screen. He is the mysterious third man in this plot with twists-and-turns that sees Holly Martins (Joseph Cotton), a naive American novelist, come to Vienna in search of a job. On reaching his destination, he learns that his Viennese friend, Harry Lime (Orson Welles), has been killed in a tragic accident. But Holly soon realizes there's more to the incident and sets out tying up the loose ends, only to find a fiend in place of his friend. Undoubtedly, this crime thriller is film noir at its best.

## ▶ TRAFFIC

CRIME | 2000 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SODERBERGH
CAST: MICHAEL DOUGLAS, CATHERINE ZETA-JONES, BENICIO DEL TORO
AWARDS: FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR.

*Traffic* is art house cinema at its innovative best and handles the war against drugs with a sensibility rare in popular cinema. Steven Soderbergh's canvas is wide. He explores evil in all its ramifications: from the badlands of Mexico to mandarins in Washington DC, the underbelly of WASP-ish America. He also features the diehard DEA vigilantes who, with sheer grit, slug it out single-handedly. *Traffic*'s most poignant scene is the reunion between a father and his heavily doped daughter who is discovered in the city's trash alleys. That the father is the US President's high-profile, anti-drug czar (Michael Douglas) and his daughter, a 16-year-old, has everything going for her makes the situation even more heart-rending. *Traffic*'s high point is its premise that the war against drugs cannot be won by bullets alone. There is little that a traditional, gun-slinging hero can do against an enemy that has invaded government, police department and family. With his hand-held camera and innovative handling – Mexico is in sepia; the US is in colour – and with his flesh and blood characters, Soderbergh comes up with a winner. Not forgetting Benicio Del Toro, with his drop-dead looks and unbridled spontaneity.

## ▶ TRAINING DAY

CRIME | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: ANTOINE FUQUA
CAST: DENZEL WASHINGTON, ETHAN HAWKE
AWARD: ONE OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (DENZEL WASHINGTON).

Denzel Washington is an apt study for creative performance. As the LAPD cop in *Training Day*, Sergeant Alonzo Harris (Denzel Washington) praises those with shades of grey with an eloquence that seems to give them an edge over traditional heroes who stand for heroism and honesty. The drama centres on a day in the life of rookie Jake Hoyt (Ethan Hawke). He has been assigned a daylong practical training shift on the mean streets of LA with the charismatic Sergeant. There are lessons to be learnt and lessons to be unlearnt, realises Hoyt as he accompanies his boss through the rough terrain filled with muggers, rapists, drug dealers and armed robbers. But more than the mean guys, it is the murky morals of the law enforcers that make Hoyt squirm. Denzel and his crack team see nothing wrong in bumping off bad guys and walking away with some loot. For, the highly decorated cop believes that to protect the sheep from the wolves, the cops themselves have to be wolves. Catch the conflicting notions of justice in this riveting film.

## ▶ THE UNTOUCHABLES

DRAMA | 1987 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BRIAN DE PALMA | CAST: KEVIN COSTNER, ROBERT DE NIRO, SEAN CONNERY, ANDY GARCIA

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## ▶ THE USUAL SUSPECTS

CRIME | 1995 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
BRYAN SINGER
**CAST:**
STEPHEN BALDWIN, GABRIEL BYRNE, BENICIO DEL TORO, KEVIN SPACEY
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (KEVIN SPACEY).

A classic 1990s noir thriller, *The Usual Suspects* picks up the best from the maestros of crime cinema, including Hitchcock and Martin Scorsese. The usual suspects are five men with dubious credentials who have been lined up by cops and the US Customs Department after a truckload of stolen guns has been hijacked. These include ex-cop-turned crook, Gabriel Byrne, psycho Stephen Baldwin, hardware specialist Kevin Pollack, crippled con man Kevin Spacey, and charismatic Benicio Del Toro. The cops are completely clueless and are led on by the bunch of hardened conmen who plan a daring heist, even as they wait to be charged or released. An absolute edge-of-the seat thriller, it has a class act by Kevin Spacey who is the focus of the police interrogation as he creates a chimera, while being questioned by the detective.

## ▶ WITNESS

CRIME | 1985 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
PETER WEIR
**CAST:**
HARRISON FORD, KELLY MCGILLIS
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

Undercover cop John Book (Harrison Ford) has nowhere to hide, once he antagonizes his bosses who are guilty of homicide. His situation becomes even more precarious since he has just one witness – a young boy – to the murder that was committed in the men's room. Hounded by his seniors, the cop seeks refuge in a distant Amish community, where the boy and his widowed mother (Kelly McGillis) belong. But crime follows him there too and the serenity of the closed, conservative lifestyle of the Amish community is shattered with encounters and a chilling climax. Harrison Ford plays to perfection what he's best at: a one-man army in the guise of Hans Solo.

# 50 BEST HORROR FILMS

## ▶ 28 DAYS LATER

HORROR | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** DANNY BOYLE
**CAST:** CILLIAN MURPHY, BRENDON GLEESON, NAOMIE HARRIS

London is deserted. There's not a soul in sight ever since the zombies took over and wiped out most of the humans. Ironically, the zombies were once harmless humans. But that was before being infected by the Rage virus that transformed them into beasts on the rampage. And now that the virus has spread as far as France and America, there aren't many safe zones left for the remaining humans to seek refuge. It's a gripping race against time, as Cillian Murphy, Naomie Harris and Brendon Gleeson hope to survive the epidemic. *28 Days Later* is still topical, with its allusion to germ warfare as a new form of terror.

## ▶ A NIGHTMARE AT ELM STREET

HORROR | 1984 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** WES CRAVEN
**CAST:** JOHN SAXON, HEATHER LANGENKAMP, AMANDA WYSS, JOHNNY DEPP

Freddy Krueger, the ripper of *A Nightmare At Elm Street*, has become one of the most recognizable villains of modern cinema. His status among horror film buffs is almost iconic. But the film is more than a teen slasher. There is an interesting twist in the midst of the merciless killings: is Freddie a fantasy, created by the hyperactive teen subconscious, or is he indeed a reality, despite his monstrous make-up and deadly claws? Young Nancy (Heather Langenkamp) is determined to find out the truth about the haunting figure that keeps trailing her with death written over his mysterious face, before all her friends fall prey to his killer claws. Watch out for a young, almost unrecognizable, Johnny Depp.

## ▶ ALIEN

SCI-FI | 1979 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** RIDLEY SCOTT | **CAST:** SIGOURNEY WEAVER, TOM SKERRITT
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## ▶ ALIENS

HORROR | 1986 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** JAMES CAMERON

This is a sequel to Ridley Scott's 1979 sci-fi thriller, *Aliens*, which catapulted Sigourney Weaver to star status. Here, she returns as

**CAST:**
SIGOURNEY WEAVER, CARRIE HENN, BILL PAXTON
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

Ellen Ripley, the lone survivor of the alien attack that destroyed the spaceship in the first film. Re-awakened from her cryogenic sleep in outer space, she returns to earth to face an uncertain future. Blamed for the misadventures of the first film, she is stripped off her pilot's license and discredited for her alien stories. But life suddenly comes back on track when Earth loses contact with LV 426, a planet that hosted alien life in the first sequel. Ripley is back on the pilot's seat, with a bunch of associates, on a mission to destroy the insect-like predators and bring back Newt (Carrie Henn), the girl who managed to survive the alien attack on the colony. Here's another chilling tryst with aliens, determined to wipe out human civilization. The only thing that stands in their way is human grit.

## ▶ APT PUPIL

DRAMA | 1998 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
BRYAN SINGER
**CAST:**
IAN MCKELLEN, BRAD RENFRO

In *Apt Pupil*, Todd Bowden (Brad Renfro) is a typical 16-year-old American, bright, friendly and civil. But only till he uncovers a deadly secret that changes his personality. Avoiding suspicion and arrest, a Nazi war criminal, Kurt Dussander (Ian McKellen), has been living quietly in Todd's neighbourhood. Seemingly a normal man, he occasionally stuffs cats into his oven, but only in the seclusion of his kitchen when the blinds are drawn. Obsessed with his enigmatic past, Todd blackmails the ageing ex-Nazi and forces him to reveal the evil he perpetrated. He even buys him a fake SS suit and replays the past for him. It's the beginning of a dangerous relationship that gives birth to a new Todd. One who nurtures a little Hitler inside him. Before long, Todd becomes addicted to power and grows intolerant, diehard and evil. His metamorphosis begins by killing a wounded pigeon and culminates in a cold-blooded murder. His actions cause him no remorse. A disturbing film, *Apt Pupil* explains the birth of Neo-Nazis at a time when tolerance has become a keyword to social interaction.

## ▶ THE BIRDS

HORROR | 1963 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ALFRED HITCHCOCK
**CAST:**
ROD TAYLOR, JESSICA TANDY, TIPPI HEDREN

Melanie Daniels (Tippi Hedren), a spoilt rich girl, leaves the big city for a small Californian seaside town to pursue her boyfriend, Mitch Brennen (Rod Taylor). But her arrival unleashes a train of bizarre events in the peaceful town. Even as Melanie tries to carve a niche for herself in her boyfriend's house, dominated by his possessive mother (Jessica Tandy), the town is beset by killer birds that come in swarms and peck at human flesh. Kudos to the genius of Hitchcock who managed to transform harmless seagulls, finches and sparrows into predators and created naked terror from mere feathered forms. Watch Melanie sit down on a bench for a smoke and turn back in horror to see the swing in the school playground fill up, one by one, by ominous crows. *The Birds* showcases the skill of a master craftsman at work.

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## ▶ THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT

HORROR | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: DANIEL MYRICK, EDUARDO SANCHEZ
CAST: HEATHER DONAHUE, JOSHUA LEONARD, MICHAEL WILLIAMS

In October 1994, three student filmmakers disappeared in the woods near Burkitville, Maryland, while shooting a documentary. A year later, their footage was found – eerie, scary and unclear – leaving viewers to fill up the darkness and the screaming silence with their imagination. This smart indie film created a sensation when it was screened for the first time at the Sundance Festival and has become immensely popular on the DVD circuit. Shot in a mock-documentary style, *The Blair Witch Project* traces the unnatural experiences of Heather Donahue, Joshua Leonard and Michael Williams as they set out to make a film on the Blair Witch, a mythical killer, who has been haunting the Black Hills Forests of Maryland since the 18th century. Once they enter the woods, the filmmakers seem to have encountered a supernatural force – ambiguous, unseen – and simply disappear, but not after their handheld cameras capture their fear and their desperate attempts to flee from the horrific being. It's enough to give anyone the shivers.

## ▶ CARRIE

HORROR | 1976 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: BRIAN DE PALMA | CAST: SISSY SPACEK, PIPER LAURIE, JOHN TRAVOLTA

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## ▶ DRACULA

HORROR | 1931 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: TOD BROWNING
CAST: BELA LUGOSI, HELEN CHANDLER

Though Dracula's story has been made into films almost 30 times, but Bela Lugosi's rendition of the Count who feasted on human blood has gone down in cinematic history as the most diabolical one. In *Dracula*, the kingly vampire who leaves his forbidding castle in Translyvania, to sail to England on a ghost ship, never looked more menacing than through the camera of German cinematographer Karl Freund. For Freund creates a chilling world of genteel terror as Dracula first goes around the streets of England in his trademark black cape, hunting down his prey and, finally, feasts himself on a young and vulnerable woman (Helen Chandler) who is about to be married. It's hard to resist the deadly mix of sex and violence in *Dracula*.

## ▶ EVIL DEAD

HORROR | 1981 | ★★★

DIRECTION: SAM RAIMI
CAST: BRUCE CAMPBELL, ELLEN SANDWEISS

A bunch of friends decide to spend a weekend in an isolated log cabin at a forest. Things take a sudden turn in *Evil Dead* when the youngsters discover a strange book written in blood on human skin. They call it "Necronomicon" or Book of the Dead that forewarns the presence of an evil being within the forest and carries incantations to arouse it. The 20-somethings cannot

resist the temptation and are soon engulfed by the beast that they've managed to arouse. Blood begins to pour and body parts begin to fly in this low budget horror flick that, now and then, sends a shiver down the spine.

## ▶ THE EXORCIST

HORROR | 1973 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
WILLIAM FRIEDKIN
**CAST:**
LINDA BLAIR, ELLEN BURSTYN, MAX VON SYDOW
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

Film buffs have voted *The Exorcist* as the scariest film of all times. Without debating the veracity of this claim, let's just say watching Linda Blair do the spider walk or twist her head at that grotesque angle are enough to give you the heebie-jeebies each time you watch this classic good-versus-evil tale. Some of its scenes have become part of cinema history by now. The film scores primarily because it's a simple story about a young girl who falls sick. Any and every girl falls sick, doesn't she? But here, there's a difference. Young Regan refuses to respond to medical treatment and her distraught mother (Ellen Burstyn) soon realizes she needs a priest (Max von Sydow) to cope with this supernatural ailment which seems to have afflicted her daughter. Devilishly chilling fare.

## ▶ THE EYE

HORROR | 2007 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
DAVID MOREAU, XAVIER PALUD
**CAST:**
JESSICA ALBA, ALESSANDRO NIVOLA

Based on a Hong Kong horror film, *The Eye* comes a bit late. Because Bollywood has already ripped it in *Naina*, where Urmila Matondkar saw death, accidents and ghosts after a cornea transplant. Just replace Matondkar with Jessica Alba and the horror sequences of *Naina* with some real chills and thrills. Jessica Alba is Sydney Wells, a young, blind musician, who has a cornea transplant, only to discover that she was better off without her sight. For her blurry vision shows her dead and dying people along with shadowy, skeletal angels of death. Scarier is the image that she sees in the mirror in place of her face. It's a sad, doleful girl who seems to be telling her something. All that Alba has to do is to ferret that girl out and find out the disasters that lie in wait. And the only person who can help her is the reluctant doctor who drives her all the way to Mexico to meet her donor. Not the best for Alba fans, but there's ample fun for horror buffs.

## ▶ THE FLY

SCI-FI | 1986 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: DAVID CRONENBERG | CAST: JEFF GOLDBLUM, GEENA DAVIS

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## ▶ FRAILTY

HORROR | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BILL PAXTON
CAST:
BILL PAXTON, MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY

The Meiks family could have been an ideal one where the widowed working-class father (Bill Paxton) could have spent his time amidst his two sons. But for his visions and his decision to clean the world ... One day, he tells his sons about his divine vision, where God instructs him to wipe out demons who exist in the form of ordinary men and women. While his younger son supports his father, the elder (Matthew McConaughey) cannot see anything sacrosanct in his father tracking down his victims. The story is told in flashback, when Matthew McConaughey walks into a police station. He declares he knows the identity of the serial killer who has wreaked havoc in Texas, claiming to be 'God's Hand'. An interesting psychological thriller, *Frailty* brings out the evils of fanaticism.

## ▶ FRANKENSTEIN

SCI-FI | 1931 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: JAMES WHALE | CAST: COLIN CLIVE, MAE CLARK, JOHN BOLES, BORIS KARLOFF

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## ▶ FRIDAY THE 13TH

HORROR | 1980 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
SEAN S. CUNNINGHAM
CAST:
BETSY PALMER, ADRIENNE KING, KEVIN BACON

Though not the first teen slasher film, *Friday the 13th* became one of the most popular horror franchises of the 1980s. It spawned sequels, T-shirts and mugs. The film revolves around a masked slasher, Jason, a boy who drowned in Camp Crystal while his counsellors were too distracted by each other. The story is as cheesy as it comes. A bunch of teens decide to take up jobs as counsellors at a crummy summer camp in New Jersey. But the camp has a sordid history behind it and has been closed for the past few years. The teens try to set it up for summer, but soon end up as victims of a masked killer who likes to chop young people, any which way. The film made Friday the 13th a mythical tryst with evil and gore.

## ▶ THE GRUDGE

HORROR | 2004 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
TAKASHI SHIMIZU

Hollywood's first remake of the Japanese horror film, *The Grudge*, was filmed by a Japanese crew with a Japanese director and was faithful to the original in terms of the story and the

CAST:
SARAH MICHELLE GELLAR, JASON BEHR

"boo!" factor. It follows the traumatic experiences of Karen (Sarah Michelle Gellar), an American care worker, who tries to investigate the eerie happenings in a haunted house in the suburbs of Tokyo. Anybody who enters the house falls prey to the Grudge, a supernatural curse that is born out of rage. Moderate scares make for a decent viewing.

## ▶ HALLOWEEN

HORROR | 1978 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN CARPENTER
CAST:
DONALD PLEASANCE, JAMIE LEE CURTIS, NICK CASTLE

Like most teen slasher films, *Halloween* features a killer with an animosity towards sexually promiscuous girls and boys. In the film's prologue, you get to see the killer's first heinous act. While still a schoolboy, he slashes his sister with a kitchen knife after she has had sex with her boyfriend. Years later, Michael Myers (Nick Castle) escapes from the asylum where he has been incarcerated. He heads for his hometown to finish his unfinished crime story on Halloween. This time, his victims are a group of young girls that include the shy, virginal Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis). No prizes for guessing who escapes the frenzy of the masked killer being chased by his doctor (Donald Pleasance) who believes he is evil incarnate. *Halloween* is a stylish thriller that doesn't unnecessarily revel in gore.

## ▶ THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE

THRILLER | 1992 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
CURTIS HANSON
CAST:
REBECCA DE MORNAY, ANNABELLA SCIORA, MATT MCCOY

Rebecca De Mornay may be the archetypal Ms. Goody Two Shoes, but behind the smiling, gentle, ever-helpful blonde visage, is the bloodthirsty nanny from hell. A chilling revenge drama that has moments of cold terror, *The Hand That Rocks The Cradle* is a nightmare for working moms who are forced to depend on nannies and babysitters. Claire, a happy suburban wife and mother, wants some time off to build her greenhouse. She hires a nanny (Rebecca De Mornay) who not only looks after her two kids but also fits in beautifully, almost as a family member. But the nanny's actually a woman scorned, thirsty to avenge the suicide of her husband and her consequent miscarriage. First, she tries to alienate Claire from her family and then hopes to wipe her out from the happy family scene altogether. There is a cold desperation in her to step into the shoes of the happy wife and mother.

## ▶ HANNIBAL

THRILLER | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
RIDLEY SCOTT
CAST:
ANTHONY HOPKINS, JULIANNE MOORE

The cannibalism of *Hannibal*, a sequel to *The Silence of the Lambs*, is no-holds-barred and loud. In her reminiscences, Agent Starling (Julianne Moore) is still wracked with nightmares of a psychopath who pounces on his victims, retreats with his mouth bloodied and with his victim writhing in faceless agony.

But all that Hannibal talks about now is his plans to eat his acquaintance's wife and how he likes to carry his food on flights. The food is human anatomy, peppered and salted. But does he eat? Nah! For Hannibal is a changed man. After having fled into dignified anonymity, he works in a library and handles the march of civilization with a macabre grin. Also, he is in love with a woman who is determined to be his nemesis. The evil this time is perpetrated by the faceless Mason Verger (Gary Oldman) who survived Hannibal's earlier exploits and now seeks revenge. The chill remains in *Hannibal* and the macabre still manages to both rivet and revolt. Hopkins again pitches in an exquisite performance that blends art with evil.

## ▶ HANNIBAL RISING

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PETER WEBBER
**CAST:**
GASPARD ULLIEL, GONG LI, DOMINIC WEST

Writer Thomas Harris continues to delve into the psyche of Hannibal Lector who rewrote rules of cannibalism in *The Silence of the Lambs*. In *Hannibal Rising*, Harris retraces Hannibal's tortured past to tell us why his favourite cuisine is fava beans, Chianti and human cheeks. Blame it on the bad Nazis who not only gassed innocent people but also ate some of the kids. In 1944, at Lithuania, when Hannibal was just a boy, a bunch of starving thugs boiled his kid sister and ate her. Hannibal, who witnessed this horrific feast, ended up messed up for life. The only way to end his nightmares was to find his sister's killers and chew their cheeks off. So what if it means losing a woman he loved, a Japanese aunt (Gong Li), who sent him to medical school and tried to smoothen out his soul? *Hannibal Rising* may not be as riveting as *The Silence of the Lambs* but, nonetheless, it is gritty fare. The French heartthrob, Gaspard Ulliel, effectively counters the flashy sophistication of Anthony Hopkins in earlier films.

## ▶ THE HAUNTING

HORROR | 1999 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JAN DE BONT
**CAST:**
LILI TAYLOR, LIAM NEESON, CATHERINE ZETA-JONES, OWEN WILSON

Hill House isn't your everyday vacation haunt. An isolated Gothic structure built in 1837, the mansion has been uninhabited for almost a century. Only two people infrequently visit it, a caretaker and a housekeeper. But even they desist from visiting the house at night due to strange myths surrounding it. The weird house gets its first guests when Dr. Jeffrey Marrow (Liam Neeson) brings here a small group of three subjects. They have consented to participate in his academic study about sleep disorders. It's a motley group of sleepless people, comprising Lili Taylor, a woman with a troubled past, the bisexual Catherine Zeta-Jones and the self-assured Owen Wilson. The foursome gets embroiled in a series of inexplicable events in *The Haunting*, as the house begins to live up to its bizarre reputation.

## ▶ HELLRAISER

HORROR | 1987 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
CLIVE BARKER
CAST:
ANDREW ROBINSON, CLAIRE HIGGINS, ASHLEY LAURENCE

If you like creepy gore, *Hellraiser* is for you. An evil presence in a decrepit house, full of flesh-eating maggots in the kitchen sink, gets hungry, time and again. It forces the lady of the house to visit singles bars and lure prospective victims to the bedroom where they are eaten by the famished incubus. Can the father and daughter save the woman of the house from playing waitress to the wicked one? You need a strong stomach to digest this horror show.

## ▶ HIDE AND SEEK

THRILLER | 2005 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN POLSON
CAST:
ROBERT DE NIRO, DAKOTA FANNING, ELIZABETH SHUE

It seems to be a happy family in *Hide And Seek*. At least for little Dakota Fanning who goes to bed every night with her mom kissing her good night and making funny faces before she switches off the light. But one such night turns into a nightmare when Dakota finds her mom lying in a bloodied bathtub with her wrists slit and her dad (Robert De Niro) trying his best to lift her out of it. Life is never the same for the little girl. De Niro tries to make a new beginning by moving into a different house. But he soon finds it isn't quite a smart move because his daughter has found an invisible friend, Charlie, who enters the house, slices up pets and people, and plasters the walls with graffiti in blood. The violence begins to grow and along with it the distance between the grieving father and the daughter. Watch out for the twist in the tale.

## ▶ THE HILLS HAVE EYES

HORROR | 1977 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
WES CRAVEN
CAST:
SUSAN LANIER, ROBERT HOUSTON

In *The Hills Have Eyes*, the Carter family is stranded in an inhospitable desert when their trailer breaks down. But their search for a mechanic becomes a veritable struggle for survival. Before the sun rises, three of the family members have been killed and the baby abducted. The retired cop's family is being hunted down by a cannibal family, living in the hills. *The Hills Have Eyes* was remade in 2007, but Wes Craven's original satire about modernity versus primitive and civilized versus uncivilized, provides the bigger chill and is a cult horror film.

## ▶ THE HILLS HAVE EYES

HORROR | 2006 | ★★★

DIRECTION: ALEXANDRA AJA
CAST: KATHLEEN QUINLAN, AARON STANFORD

*The Hills Have Eyes* is a re-creation of Wes Craven's 1977 horror flick that became a cult film for gore fans. A good old American family takes a trip on a trailer through the expansive western desert. Soon, they see their holiday turning into a nightmare. Hungry, bloodthirsty mutants creep into their van and begin to feast upon the young and beautiful people. Terror reaches a crescendo when one of the mutants runs away with the family's *bachcha*. It is left to the battered dad to rescue his infant from the soulless creatures. Soulless, did we say? Nah! These are products of state-sponsored terror: miners who were genetically altered when the government surreptitiously conducted nuclear experiments on them. *The Hills Have Eyes* is truly a gore fest, like *Apocalypto* and *300*. Good for aficionados of horror and gore.

## ▶ INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

HORROR | 1978 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: PHILIP KAUFFMAN
CAST: DONALD SUTHERLAND, BROOKE ADAMS, JEFF GOLDBLUM

Alien pods have landed in San Francisco. The city is plagued by a peculiar kind of flu that transforms loved ones into zombies. Brooke Adams rushes to Health Inspector Donald Sutherland when her boyfriend is transformed into an unfeeling, unresponsive person. The Inspector seeks out the help of a local psychiatrist, but soon realises he is among the last of the humans. Almost everyone has been overpowered by an alien force that seeps into bodies of people and is hell-bent on wiping out love, trust and emotional bonding from the earth. *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* is the chilling scenario of a futuristic world where zombies will replace humans.

## ▶ JAWS

HORROR | 1975 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: PETER SCHEIDER, ROBERT SHAW, RICHARD DREYFUSS
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## ▶ JURASSIC PARK

SCI-FI | 1993 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: SAM NEILL, LAURA DERN, JEFF GOLDBLUM, RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH
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## ▶ MISERY

CRIME | 1990 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: ROB REINER | CAST: KATHY BATES, JAMES CAAN
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## ▶ THE MUMMY

THRILLER | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
STEPHEN SOMMERS
CAST:
BRENDAN FRASER, RACHEL WEISZ

*The Mummy* opens with a prologue set in the 13th century when Imoteph is buried alive and becomes the eponymous mummy. Cut to Cairo, 1923. A British librarian (Rachel Weisz) and an American archaeologist (Brendan Fraser) set out for the ancient city of Hamunaptra in search of a lost treasure hidden in a tomb. However, their journey is soon transformed into a life-threatening misadventure when they unwittingly bring the mummy back to life. And the fact that the mummy is terribly angry – with a three-point mission: it wants to kick-start the ten Biblical plagues, resurrect its dead lover and regenerate itself – makes life miserable for the bounty hunters. *The Mummy* is more fun than horror, with state-of-the art computer generated special effects.

## ▶ NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

HORROR | 1968 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
GEORGE A. ROMERO
CAST:
DUANE JONES, JUDITH O'DEA, CARL HARDMAN

All that Barbara (Judith O'Dea) wanted was to visit the cemetery in the countryside with her brother. But her visit soon turns into a nightmare when the dead rise from graves and turn the quiet neighbourhood into a living hell. While a zombie kills Barbara's brother, she seeks refuge in a farmhouse with some other scared people. Meanwhile, the army of dead people keeps coming closer. Can humans stand up to the living dead? And can they survive each other, as infighting begins among the desperate humans? *The Night Of The Living Dead* is a relentless horror show, with death stalking innocent people.

## ▶ THE OMEN

HORROR | 1976 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
RICHARD DONNER
CAST:
GREGORY PECK, LEE REMICK, HARVEY STEPHEN
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

The son of Satan is born to a high-profile couple and holds a terrible portent for the world. Will politics literally become the devil's workshop? But that's for the future to handle. Currently, it's left to the Thorn family (Gregory Peck and Lee Remick) to find out why their young son, Damien (Harvey Stephen), is so different from other smiling, happy kids. What lies behind his sullen silence that bodes terror and doom? Is the harried priest's prophecy about the arrival of the anti-Christ real? Watch Damien smile gleefully as he pushes his mother off the balcony with his tricycle and you'll get the chilling picture.

## ▶ THE OMEN

HORROR | 2006 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN MOORE

The anti-Christ is here. And unlike earlier versions, in *The Omen* it is the cesspool of politics that serves as his breeding ground. The film's political tenor is evident in the opening shots. The Pope is given an audio-visual show in which most Biblical prophecies of Armageddon seem to be coming true through

CAST:
JULIA STILES, LIEV SHREIBER, MIA FARROW, SEAMUS DAVEY FITZPATRICK

recent events like 9/11, the Columbia shuttle disaster, the tsunami destruction ... Time for the devil to cohabit the Jackal and give birth to his son who finds a home with a righteous American couple (Liev Shreiber and Julia Stiles) who refuses to don roles of anti-Joseph and anti-Mary. And they must pay the price for their virtuousness, especially since Satan's child has found his perfect nanny in the evil Mia Farrow. She sends out the devil's signal with a flicker of her eyes and at times, she does his bidding herself. Does *The Omen* have the requisite chills? It does. There are menacing black dogs, weird suicides, chilling murders, devilish glares and a decapitation too. The political twist is novel and makes for a great sequel. Think of a plot that's more dramatic (and politically incorrect) than the one where the Boy Devil grows up in the White House!

## ▶ POLTERGEIST

HORROR | 1982 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
TOBE HOOPER
CAST:
CRAIG T. NELSON, JOBETH WILLIAMS

A happy suburban family finds its life turning into a nightmare when their home becomes infested with ghosts. The horror show begins when one of the children is sucked into the TV and has to be rescued by a team of parapsychologists. Soon, the salesman dad (Craig T. Nelson) and the happy-housewife mom realize it isn't just about furniture that shifts on its own and objects that go bump and grind on the floor; it's about a pack of ghosts who seem to be parading up and down the staircase, determined to snatch the kids. It takes a psychic midget (Zelda Rubinstein) to empower the heroic parents in their war against the spooks. *Poltergeist*, written by Steven Spielberg, has its moments of chill.

## ▶ PSYCHO

HORROR | 1960 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: ALFRED HITCHCOCK | CAST: ANTHONY PERKINS, JANET LEIGH

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## ▶ RESIDENT EVIL: EXTINCTION

ACTION | 2007 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
RUSSELL MULCAHY
CAST:
MILLA JOVOVICH, ALI LARTER

*Resident Evil: Extinction* is the third in the *Resident Evil* franchise, based on the popular Capcom video game series. And it is the best when compared to the earlier two, *Resident Evil* and *Resident Evil Apocalypse*. In the film, Alice (Milla Jovovich) returns after escaping from the zombie-run Racoon City, only to land up in zombie-run Las Vegas. Her destination is Alaska where she intends finding a safe haven from the sinister Umbrella Corporation, run by the evil Dr. Issacs. Go see Alice run for her life, helped by a bunch of renegade buddies, led by Ali Larter. But before she can find a safe haven, she must combat all kinds of geeky creatures that include weird hounds and ravenous

ravens. This ensures that viewers get their prescribed dose of grime and gore, which is the lure of this franchise. For all you Milla Jovovich watchers, there's a lots to watch, including Milla in silken sheets, along with one in a cocktail dress and boots, ready to kick butt and flip bullets. And for the fun parts, there's the kinky skeletal zombie trying to learn how to handle a cell phone and a digital camera.

## ▶ THE RING

HORROR | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
GORE VEBRINSKI
**CAST:**
NAOMI WATTS, MARTIN HENDERSON, BRIAN COX

This is an American re-make of the Japanese horror film, *Ringu*, which focuses on the horrific effect that a videotape has on its viewers. Anyone who views the tape receives a call after its completion, informing him of his impending death. The viewer is told that he has just seven more days to live, before he falls prey to the digital evil. A sceptical Seattle-based reporter (Naomi Watts) sees a good story in the myth and tries to find out the truth behind the macabre events. She watches the tape and then tries to beat the Grim Reaper at his own game. But things tend to go out of hand when her young son watches the offensive tape too and receives a death threat. Be careful before you press 'Play' again!

## ▶ ROSEMARY'S BABY

HORROR | 1968 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROMAN POLANSKI
**CAST:**
MIA FARROW, JOHN CASSAVETES, RUTH GORDON
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

*Rosemary's Baby* is a classic when it comes to horror films. What's remarkable is that it creates an air of stupefying terror without a single glimpse of actual horror. No bloody monsters, no screaming ghosts, no predator aliens, just a suggestion of the ultimate abomination where Satan appears in a crib and the mother's face shows it all. Rosemary Woodhouse moves into a new apartment with her husband and tries to settle down. But she is plagued by strange noises and mysterious goings-on in her neighbourhood. She hopes things will get better when she discovers she's pregnant and befriends the seemingly benign old couple next door. Things do not get better and Rosemary gets paranoid about her unborn baby as the supernatural threatens to engulf her and neighbours turn sinister. Urban life never got more ominous than this.

## ▶ SCREAM

HORROR | 1996 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: WES CRAVEN | CAST: DAVID ARQUETTE, NEVE CAMPBELL, COURTENEY COX, SKEET ULRICH

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## ▶ THE SHINING

HORROR | 1980 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STANLEY KUBRICK | CAST: JACK NICHOLSON, SHELLEY DUVALL

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## ▶ THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

THRILLER | 1991 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JONATHAN DEMME
CAST:
ANTHONY HOPKINS, JODIE FOSTER
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR, BEST ACTRESS.

*The Silence Of The Lambs* is the sort of film that makes you believe in the impossible. It makes you believe that a cannibal could be a hero and a gentleman and could even win your admiration despite sending a chill down your spine. It isn't the inexperienced FBI cadet, Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster), who becomes morally ambivalent towards the notorious Dr. Hannibal Lector (Anthony Hopkins) as she seeks his help while trying to nab another psychopath. Anthony Hopkins' intense portrayal of the character transforms Hannibal the Cannibal into such a connoisseur-cum-intellectual that even the viewer gets swept away by his charisma. Gaze into the deep, dark recesses of Hannibal's twisted soul and find out what psychopaths are made of. Horror never remained the same after this film.

## ▶ THE SIXTH SENSE

THRILLER | 1999 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MANOJ NIGHT SHYAMALAN | CAST: BRUCE WILLIS, HALEY JOEL OSMENT, TONI COLLETTE

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## ▶ SLEEPY HOLLOW

HORROR | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
TIM BURTON
CAST:
JOHNNY DEPP, CHRISTINA RICCI, MIRANDA RICHARDSON
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

It's upstate New York, 1799. The dour hamlet of Sleepy Hollow is suddenly thrown in a state of disarray when its residents begin to fall prey to a killer who decapitates them and walks away with their heads. They call him the Headless Hunter, the devilish ghost of a Hessian trooper who was slain in the woods and is hungry for revenge. But that's a theory that doesn't satisfy Ichabod Crane (Johnny Depp), a New York constable, who is sent to investigate the crime. Crane doesn't believe in the supernatural and is confident of finding a rational explanation behind the horrific crimes. But, sometimes, reason isn't enough and evil can exist in the realm of the unknown. The highpoint of *Sleepy Hollow* is its creepy atmosphere, stylish artwork, distinct narrative style and Johnny Depp's laid-back charm.

## ▶ SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET

MUSICAL | 2008 | ★★★ ½

**DIRECTION:**
TIM BURTON
**CAST:**
JOHNNY DEPP, HELENA BONHAM CARTER, ALAN RICKMAN

Adapted from Broadway's bloodiest musical, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* is both bleak and brilliant. Sweeney Todd, the razor-sharp barber of backstreet London, shows how rage can turn a gentle person into a demon and how sorrow can transform a sensitive soul into a soulless killing machine. And it takes the talent of Johnny Depp to create a towering character out of a cold-blooded killer. He slits the throat of his customers instead of giving them a shave and sends them down through a chute to the pie shop below. Why? So that his landlady, the fiendish Mrs. Lovett (Helena Bonham Carter), can mince them for her succulent meat pies that have become a rage in impoverished London. The enigmatic duo sees nothing wrong in their deeds because Todd is doing it for revenge (his family has been ruined by Alan Rickman, an unscrupulous judge) while Mrs. Lovett's doing it for love (she adores the anguished barber). Watch the film for it might be the funkiest freak show in town.

## ▶ THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

HORROR | 1974 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
TOBE HOOPER
**CAST:**
MARILYN BURNS, ALLEN DANZIGER

Five friends set out on a holiday in Texas and end up making a fatal mistake. They give a lift to a manic hitch-hiker but throw him out when he attacks one of them. Is that the end of their trouble? No, it's just the beginning of a bloody nightmare, where one by one, they end up as victims of a demented family that lives in a decrepit house and chops people with a chainsaw after hanging them on meat hooks. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is unabashedly blood splattered and meant only for those with strong nerves.

## ▶ THE THING

HORROR | 1982 | ★★★ ½

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN CARPENTER
**CAST:**
KURT RUSSELL, WILFORD BRIMLEY

*The Thing* works primarily due to its disturbing premise that there could be an alien among us. Worse still, there's no way we can ferret it out, since it takes the form of people we know. In a deserted outpost in the Antarctic, the alien infiltrates an expedition team. The alien first appears as an odd creature, half-

wolf, half-dog. It's left to Kurt Russell, leading an ensemble cast, to sift between the humans and the alien that silently devours the 12-men team and acquires the form of its last victim. A disturbing tale of desperate men trapped in the frozen wilderness with a devilish entity.

## ▶ THE VILLAGE

THRILLER | 2004 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MANOJ NIGHT SHYAMALAN
**CAST:**
JOAQUIN PHOENIX, BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD, ADRIAN BRODY

First, *The Village* should be seen for its canvas. In terms of sheer artistry, the film scores with its Monet-like backdrops. With smooth skill, M. Night Shyamalan flips one pretty picture after another. Expectedly, the spook show seems a let-down compared to *The Sixth Sense*. But this time round, Shyamalan wanted to sculpt his horror show like an Aesop's fable with a message. The message? Money is evil. Towns are hellholes. Villages are pristine. And against this morality play, he develops a love triangle among a blind girl (Bryce Dallas Howard), the village idiot (Adrian Brody) and a taciturn, angry young man (Joaquin Phoenix). The village almost loses its secret of survival when an accident occurs. And the blind beauty is forced to cross the forbidden forest, infested with red monsters, into the iniquitous town that lies beyond... *The Village* is different, with a delightful philosophical undertone.

## ▶ WHAT LIES BENEATH

THRILLER | 2000 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT ZEMECKIS
**CAST:**
HARRISON FORD, MICHELLE PFEIFFER

In *What Lies Beneath*, Dr. Norman Spencer (Harrison Ford) moves out into the countryside with wife Claire (Michelle Pfeiffer). The house, situated besides a placid lake in Vermont, could have been the perfect haven for the couple who has suddenly been left alone after their daughter moved on to college. But the lonely wife is soon haunted by mournful images of a young girl who seems desperate to share her sad story. It's the beginning of an investigation into the sordid past, where the lake turns out to be anything but placid, and marriage a game marred by deceit.

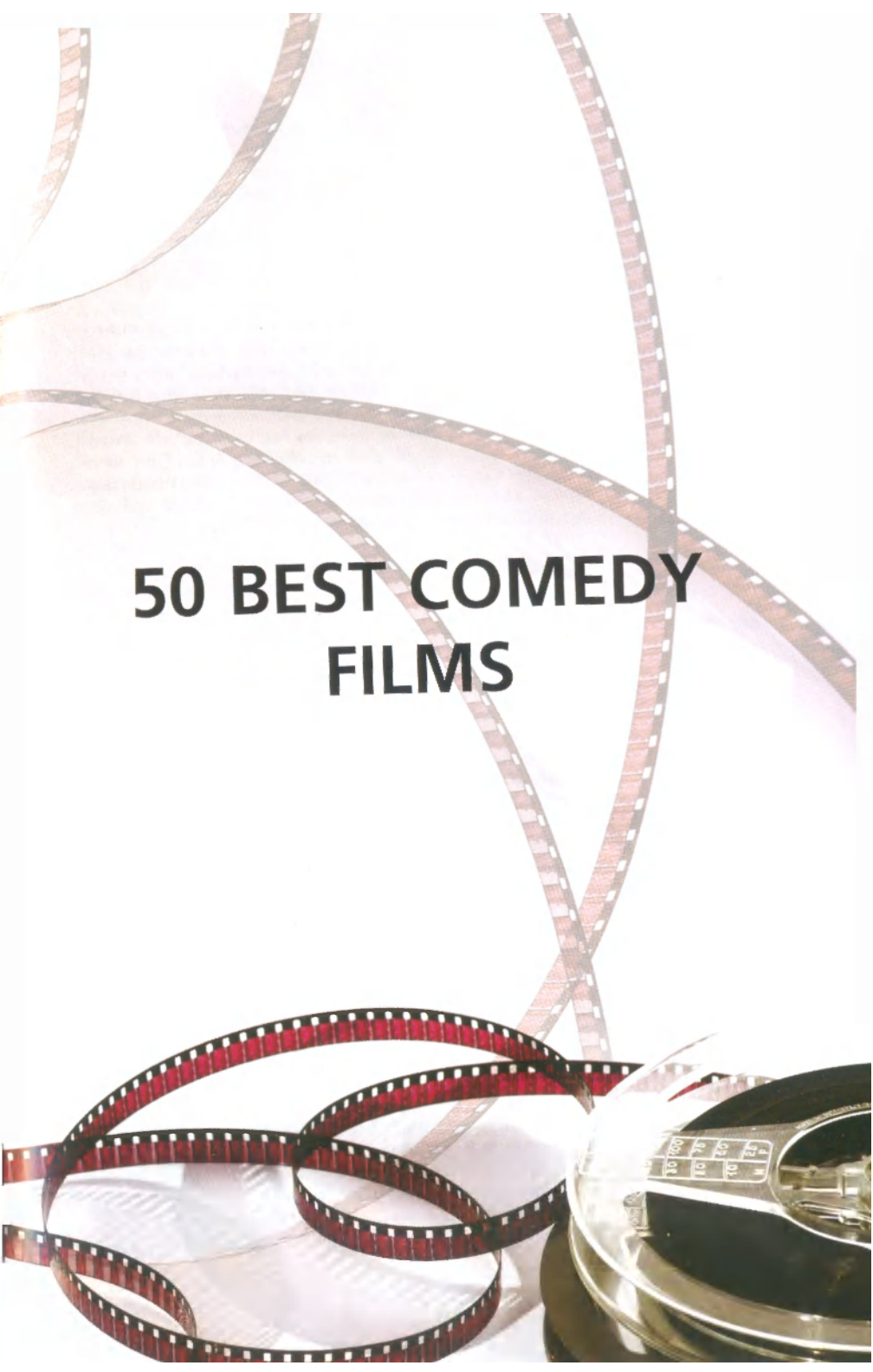
## ▶ THE WICKER MAN

HORROR | 1973 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ROBIN HARDY
**CAST:**
EDWARD WOODWARD, CHRISTOPHER LEE, BRITT ECKLAND

A cop (Edward Woodward) receives an anonymous letter about the disappearance of a young girl in Summerisle, a forgotten Scottish village. The cop arrives at the village to investigate the crime and discovers a strange community of pagan worshippers, led by Lord Summerisle (Christopher Lee). As if this encounter with heathens who worshipped the male genitalia wasn't troubling enough for the deeply religious sergeant, he doesn't really know whether the girl has actually disappeared or has been deliberately hidden for some devious reason. It's truly a horror show but, thankfully, it's minus blood and gore.

# 50 BEST COMEDY FILMS



## ▶ A FISH CALLED WANDA

COMEDY | 1988 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** CHARLES CRICHTON
**CAST:** JOHN CLEESE, KEVIN KLINE, JAMIE LEE CURTIS
**AWARD:** ONE OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (KEVIN KLINE).

A gang of four oddballs decide to rob a jewellery store, little realizing that an ordinary heist can turn into fishy business if there's a trickster woman in their midst. Wanda (Jamie Lee Curtis), the only woman in the gang, doesn't mind playing a bit wanton in order to grab the loot for herself. In her bid to do so, Wanda inducts her aide, the psychotic Nietzsche buff, Otto West (Kevin Kline), in the gang. Together, they make an anonymous call to cops and manage to get gang leader George (Tom Georgeson) arrested. But the foxy head signs a pact with his mild-mannered lawyer (John Cleese), making him the target of wily Wanda's fake ardour, as she tries to seduce him into revealing the whereabouts of the loot. Somewhere in between the hilarious love roulette, there are two more players: Wanda's boyfriend Ken (Michael Palin) and her accomplice Otto, who is ridden with jealousy. A zany comedy, *A Fish Called Wanda* pokes fun at any and everything and features one of the most uproarious striptease in cinema by John Cleese.

## ▶ ACE VENTURA: PET DETECTIVE

COMEDY | 1994 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:** TIM SHADYAC
**CAST:** JIM CARREY, COURTNEY COX

Jim Carrey burst into the limelight with *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, creating a new brand of Hollywood hero: one who is crude, with beastly manners, and is insubordinate to authority. More important, he keeps you grinning with his animal histrionics: walking like a gibbon, chewing nuts like his pet budgie and sniffing like his poodle. He generally transforms the world into one big animal farm where animals are friendly and humans are beasts. Carrey is a Pet Detective who is hired by Miami Dolphins, a football team, to track down Snowflake, their mascot dolphin, which has been stolen on the eve of the Super Bowl League. The detective does deliver, but only after he has created a riot, ruffling the status quo.

## ▶ AMERICAN GRAFFITI

DRAMA | 1973 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** GEORGE LUCAS | **CAST:** RICHARD DREYFUSS, RONNY HOWARD, PAUL LE MATT, CHARLES MARTIN SMITH

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## ▶ ANALYZE THIS

COMEDY | 1999 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:** HAROLD RAMIS
**CAST:** ROBERT DE NIRO, BILLY CRYSTAL, LISA KUDROW

The Boss, Paul Vitti (Robert De Niro), needs help. Once a diehard killer, the mobster can hardly see a gun now. Suddenly, he's turned into a soft-hearted man who bursts into tears at the slightest pretext. Even soppy soap operas make the tough guy cry. Surely, this means big trouble for the gangster chief in an age of machismo, especially when his rivals are waiting to finish him off. Time to call in the shrink, psychotherapist Ben Sobel

(Billy Crystal), and undergo intense couch therapy, even if it means pulling the doctor out of his wedding with news reporter, Laura (Lisa Kudrow). Mayhem, but not quite mad; comic, but not funny enough. Watch *Analyze This* for a chuckle, not a laugh.

## ▶ ANGER MANAGEMENT

COMEDY | 2003 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PETER SEGAL
**CAST:**
JACK NICHOLSON, ADAM SANDLER

In *Anger Management*, Dave Buznik (Adam Sandler) is a guy who works in a pets' clothing company. He's mild-mannered, apologetic, stuttering and awkward whenever emotional issues arise. His girlfriend, Linda (Marisa Tomei), wants him to pop the question, but Sandler's too shy and unsure for that. So, Linda hires Doctor Buddy Rydell (Jack Nicholson), head shrink and counsellor, to teach Dave to come out of his shell. Does the therapy work? It does. Because Jack Nicholson is Jack Nicholson: mesmeric, unpredictable and charming. He uncovers all his patient's fears and unlocks all his pent-up emotions, albeit in a bizarre style of treatment. A light-hearted, breezy entertainer, this Sandler-Nicholson film is a treat.

## ▶ ANTZ

ANIMATION | 1998 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ERIC DARNELL, TIM JOHNSON
**CAST:**
VOICES OF WOODY ALLEN, SYLVESTER STALLONE, SHARON STONE

*Antz* shrewdly uses animation to talk about politics. The film also showcases the amazing range of histrionics by its lead actors who have lent their voices to Antz, the gangly, gargoyle faced creatures. If Gene Hackman is General Mandible, plotting treason with refined dignity, Sharon Stone is coquettish ant-Princess Bala. Even Sylvester Stallone lends inflection to his deadpan voice as Weaver, a soldier. But the best is Woody Allen. His voice-over for Z-4195, a rebel and an iconoclast worker ant, is a classic act. Woody lends charm even to Z's whining, as he dreams about a different social order and a grand love story, featuring Princess Bala. Bored stiff with his monotonous life, he swaps places with friend Weaver to catch a glimpse of Princess Bala. Even as he tries to do so, the army is sent to the battlefront. This is actually a death trap laid by scheming General Mandible who wants to usurp power. Being the sole survivor, Z returns as a war hero, who is much feted. He then abducts the princess, escapes to Insectopia – a garbage heap of

putrid milk and rotten food – but returns. He takes his friends to Insectopia, one where freedom of choice is an intrinsic part of existence. Behind the brilliant visuals – Z and Bala stuck on a bit of gum on a giant shoe, the battle sequences, the party at Insectopia –*Antz* is essentially a political film.

## ▶ AUSTIN POWERS: INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY

COMEDY | 1997 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JAY ROACH
**CAST:**
MIKE MYERS, ELIZABETH HURLEY

A delightful spoof on the James Bond series, *Austin Powers: International Man Of Mystery*, is uproariously funny. A goofy, bespectacled, secret agent, Austin Powers (Mike Myers), has bad teeth, hairy chest and a penchant for women. His character makes mockery of James Bond, the suave British secret agent. Austin's depiction of Dr. Evil, a megalomaniac who dreams of world domination, is an irreverent dig at villains in Bond movies. Bond and Austin have one thing in common: their desire to save the world from impending doom. With Elizabeth Hurley pitching in as Austin's perfect sidekick, the film is wild, ribald and an excellent parody.

## ▶ BEVERLY HILL COPS

COMEDY | 1984 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN BREST
**CAST:**
EDDIE MURPHY, JUDGE REINHOLD, JOHN ASHTON

Eddie Murphy's detective Axel Foley in *Beverly Hill Cops* is regarded as Murphy's best and has spawned a series of films. The irreverent Detroit cop, who breaks all rules and has a penchant for the F-word, comes as a culture shock to the uppity Beverly Hills people who aren't quite ready for Foley's unorthodox ways of combating crime. But the odd man out walks away with all the laughs, even as he lionizes the common man. Unfazed by money and muscle power, he tries to avenge his friend's murder and bring the ultra-chic down to terra firma.

## ▶ BIG

COMEDY | 1988 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PENNY MARSHALL
**CAST:**
TOM HANKS, ELIZABETH PERKINS, ROBERT LOGGIA

*Big* is every kid's dream come true. For, rarely would you find a teen who doesn't want to grow big, ASAP. And what fun if he finds a wacko machine – the Zoltar – that can make his gawky teenage years disappear and zip him into the glitzy adult world with push button speed. At least that's what happens to young Josh as he metamorphoses into BIG Tom Hanks, after an encounter with the magical machine. Suddenly, life turns into a veritable ball, with no childhood blues to mar the perks of adulthood: gals, gizmos and geeks, all at his service. Especially since he's the vice-president of a monopolistic toy company that flourishes under his expert (read, childish) guidance. But there's trouble in paradise and young Josh discovers he isn't ready to abandon the carefree innocence of childhood for sex and romance, just yet. Tom Hanks is an absolute treat as a boy trapped in a man's body.

## ▶ BIG DADDY

COMEDY | 1999 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** DENNIS DUGAN
**CAST:** ADAM SANDLER, JOEY LAUREN ADAMS, COLE SPROUSE

*Big Daddy* is a perfect film on parenting, where Daddy is a synonym for such-a-good-friend and sons are best buddies. So what if they are just five- year-old, they can still hang out with their dad in parks, movie halls or football leagues. And so what if Dads aren't biological dads, as is the case with Sonny Koufax (Adam Sandler) and his adopted son, five-year-old Julian. Their bond grows with love and togetherness. Sandler ostensibly adopts him to impress his girlfriend and prove to her that he's not scared of adult responsibilities. Among his group of law school buddies, he is the only one who has been avoiding issues like career and marriage, opting instead for a part-time job, endless hours in sports bar and prolonged takeaway meals. But one week of playing daddy changes everything. Sandler learns a lot more in life: from sleepless nights, parent-teacher meets, tutorials on ethics, cleanliness to good-neighbourliness. But he does not lose his sense of fun and zest for life, which he communicates to Julian. For, along with tying shoelaces, Sandler teaches Julian how to pick his nose, play with spit and pee against the wall.

## ▶ BLAZING SADDLES

COMEDY | 1974 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** MEL BROOKS
**CAST:** GENE WILDER, CLEAVON LITTLE, MADELINE KAHN

A bunch of racketeers want to build a railroad and the only way they can do so is by emptying the town of its residents. They come up with an easy solution: appoint a black sheriff, say goodbye to law and order, and the people will abandon the godforsaken town. But Black Bart (Cleavon Little), the newly appointed black sheriff, manages to win over the townsfolk, appoints a drunken sharpshooter (Gene Wilder) as his deputy, and brews a little rebellion in the laid-back town. A film that makes a comedy out of a western, *Blazing Saddles* is a laugh riot all the way.

## BRINGING UP BABY

COMEDY | 1938 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** HOWARD HAWKS | **CAST:** KATHARINE HEPBURN, CARY GRANT
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## ▶ BRUCE ALMIGHTY

COMEDY | 2003 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:** TIM SHAYDAC
**CAST:** JIM CARREY, JENNIFER ANISTON

In his attempt to project a serious side, Jim Carrey is a bit mild in *Bruce Almighty*. Yet, the film sparkles only when Carrey lets loose the clown in him, when he tries to play God with the funny bone. Sample him splitting his soap like God splits the river for Moses and you might just split your sides! But when he tries to play a sensitive, serious, do-gooder guy, he fails to convince. The story? Bruce Nolan (Jim Carrey) wonders why the

Almighty (Morgan Freeman) doesn't answer his prayers. The Almighty gets sick of his constant whining and asks him to be God for a day and find out how tough the whole business of divinity is. Key question? What's Jennifer Aniston doing here?

## ▶ CITY SLICKERS

COMEDY | 1991 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** RON UNDERWOOD
**CAST:** BILLY CRYSTAL, DANIEL STERN, BRUNO KIRBY, JACK PALANCE
**AWARD:** ONE OSCAR.

What happens when three city slickers abandon their boring urban life and decide to reinvent themselves with a life-changing vacation as 'real' cowboys? Sheer *masti*! For moving herds of cattle and roughing it out on a ranch isn't exactly John Wayne stuff. This is the bitter truth that the friends, led by Mitch Robbins (Billy Crystal), soon discover in *City Slickers*. Crystal is your average white-collar worker who has lost his smile in the tedium of big city life. His friends, Phil Berquist and Ed Furillo (Daniel Stern and Bruno Kirby), are also bitten by midlife crisis. Hence, they join a bunch of other urban cowboys on a cattle ranch to beat the big city blues. It's a bumbling, fumbling vacation that lies in store for them: an experience that's so very different from the larger-than-life Westerns that they have grown up watching. The film is fun to watch.

## ▶ COMING TO AMERICA

COMEDY | 1988 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** JOHN LANDIS
**CAST:** EDDIE MURPHY, JAMES EARL JONES, SHARI HEADLEY

Prince Akeem Joffer (Eddie Murphy) may be the prince of an African kingdom in *Coming To America* but his ideas about romance are truly Western. For when it comes to love and marriage, Prince Joffer, of the fictitious African country, Zamunda, wants a woman who excites him both mentally and physically rather than an unquestioning, subservient beauty queen. And the only place he can find such liberated women is in Queens, the borough of dissent in the Big Apple. So, the royal entourage reaches America and discovers it like Occidental exotica. Murphy makes merry, kicking up a fuss about Americanisms while falling in love with Lisa (Shari Headley).

## ▶ DR. STRANGELOVE OR HOW I LEARNED HOW TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB

COMEDY | 1969 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** STANLEY KUBRICK | **CAST:** PETER SELLERS, GEORGE C. SCOTT

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## ▶ DUCK SOUP

COMEDY | 1933 | ★★★★

Comedies of the Marx brothers are unrivalled, and *Duck Soup* is truly their best film. A brilliant satire on the futility and absurdity of war and politics, the film creates mayhem with exploits of its protagonist, Rufus Firefly (Groucho Marx),

**DIRECTION:**
LEO MCCAREY
**CAST:**
GROUCHO MARX, HARPO MARX, CHICO MARX

dictator of Freedonia, who wages war against neighbouring Sylvania, for no apparent reason. Unless an attempt to prove he's not a political upstart and impress a woman are reasons enough to attack and destroy innocent people. The film's high points are witty one-liners and exquisite vaudeville humour where the other Marx brothers, Harpo and Chico, team up with Groucho to create some of the most memorable comedy set-pieces in the history of cinema. Watch Harpo trying to hide from the dictator by pretending to be his mirror image, and then count the umpteen retakes of the incident in films down the years.

## ▶ THE FULL MONTY

COMEDY | 1997 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
PETER CATTANEO
**CAST:**
ROBERT CARLYLE, MARK ADDY, TOM WILKINSON, WILLIAM SNAPE
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

Unemployment isn't simply about losing your job; it's also about losing your self-esteem. When steel mills close down in Sheffield, unemployed worker Gaz (Robert Carlyle) convinces his friends from the dole queue to join him in setting up Hot Metals, a band that promises its viewers no-holds-barred entertainment. Though they lack hot, toned, muscled bodies, the overweight, over-age and desperate men decide to shed their shyness and do the full monty for the much-needed money. Despite their initial reluctance, they realize that this is the only way to hold onto things dear to them: girlfriends, marriages, sons and purpose in life. *The Full Monty* is a heartwarming story of love, despair, friendship and fear. There is an undercurrent of humour running through the highs and lows that pepper the lives of these small-town yokels.

## ▶ GHOSTBUSTERS

COMEDY | 1984 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
IVAN REITMAN
**CAST:**
BILL MURRAY, DAN AYKROYD, HAROLD RAMIS, SIGOURNEY WEAVER

In *Ghostbusters*, three de-frocked parapsychologists (Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Harold Ramis) get back into business after their experiments with the paranormal are dismissed as gobbledygook. They set up a special shop, called Ghostbusters, after there are complaints about psychic mishaps in Manhattan. Client Sigourney Weaver complains that in her kitchen, eggs fry by themselves, while her next-door-neighbour Rick Moranis sees strange monsters in the apartment. It's time for

Ghostbusters to bust the intruders with their made-to-order arsenal: nuclear-powered backpacks and a battery of repartee. Catch the climax with the larger-than-life monster as it scuttles down the skyscraper. And get your fill of rib-tickling good-versus-evil drama.

## ▶ THE GREAT DICTATOR

COMEDY | 1940 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: CHARLES CHAPLIN
CAST: CHARLES CHAPLIN, PAULETTE GODARD

The genius of Charles Chaplin transforms Hitler into an outrageously bad joke in this hard-hitting satire on fascism. Here, he plays a double role as Adenoid Hynkel, dictator of Tomainia, and his lookalike, a Jewish barber, prone to bouts of amnesia. Naturally, the barber is mistaken for the despot and director Chaplin literally rips him apart as a blabbering buffoon who created havoc on the world stage. As satire, *The Great Dictator* remains extremely powerful and unmatched, even today. *The Great Dictator* was the first film in which Chaplin's quintessential character, The Tramp, could be heard speaking, since this was his first talkie. And what better way to break the sound barrier than in a moving plea for tolerance and peace that form the film's climax. The speech makes sense even today.

## ▶ HOME ALONE 1 & 2

COMEDY | 1990 & 1992 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: CHRIS COLUMBUS
CAST: MACAULEY CULKIN, JOE PESCI, DANIEL STERN

*Home Alone 1*, which brought to life the young protagonist, Kevin McAllister (Macauley Culkin), acquired cult status. The film not only made a star out of Culkin but also struck an instant chord with viewers. Such was his appeal that it transcended geographical and cultural boundaries. The cute, precocious eight-year-old is the quintessential brat. Whether he wards off bad guys, Mav and Harry ("The Wet Bandits"), who want to burgle his house on Christmas Eve in Part One or whether he wanders desolate in the unfamiliar streets of New York trying to outmanoeuvre the "Wet Bandits" in Part Two, Culkin is utterly convincing as an adorable boy who needs a warm hug, despite his tantrums. Both films were front-runners and brought back the family centre stage. With the head and heart at the right place, *Home Alone* series have a perennial charm for young and old alike.

## ▶ IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT

ROMANCE | 1934 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: FRANK CAPRA | CAST: CLARK GABLE, CLAUDETTE CAULBERT

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## ▶ LIAR LIAR

COMEDY | 1997 | ★★★½

Adults need to lie sometimes. They need to call a spade a star, a crook a gentleman and a beast a beauty, in order to follow the

**DIRECTION:**
TOM SHADYAC
**CAST:**
JIM CARREY, MAURA TIERNEY, JUSTIN COOPER

rules of a supposedly civilized society. Now, that's a rule Fletcher Reede's (Jim Carrey) young son, Max, cannot understand. For Junior believes in prep school morals and sees dad as a hero who needs to fulfill his promises and be there for birthdays, games and bedtime stories. There is a joyous simplicity in *Liar Liar* when dad Carrey tries to live up to his son's expectations, despite his hectic routine. Carrey gets his chance to change when his son's birthday wish comes true and he can no longer lie. It's the beginning of a roller-coaster ride that shakes up his life. Carrey carries on his funny business with a touch of warmth.

## ▶ LOINS OF PUNJAB

COMEDY | 2007 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MANISH ACHARYA
**CAST:**
SHABANA AZMI, AJAY NAIDU, AYESHA DHARKAR, DARSHAN ZARIWALA

A tribute to NRI-ied India, *apna* Bollywood and Tellywood, *Loins Of Punjab* comes straight from the heart. Even the title is a *salaam* to bad man Ajit who gave us that memorable line, *Sara shehr mujhe* 'Loin' (read, lion) *ke naam se janta hai*. Drafted as a take on popular reality shows, *American Idol* and *Indian Idol*, the film is essentially a two-day talent hunt for a *desi* idol in New Jersey, a microcosm of India. So, you have the Patels wanting to sip their 'cock' (read coke); the *bhangra* jockeys doing a jig with their *balle-balle* number called *khoon kharaba*; the sad Indian who has been laid off in post 9/11 India because his name's Saddam Hussain; the statistical Bachchan fan whose job has been outsourced to India; the pretty American born *desi* who can't speak Hindi yet dreams of someday making it big in Bollywood; the scheming society woman (Shabana Azmi) and the host NRI billionaire who became famous as the Loin of Punjab because he scripted his success story selling pork loins to America. It's a wild weekend that this eclectic mix of people spends together, with delightful little digs on racism and reverse racism. Watch out for a magnificently mean portrayal by Shabana Azmi.

## ▶ LOOK WHO'S TALKING

COMEDY | 1989 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
AMIE HECKERLING
**CAST:**
JOHN TRAVOLTA, KIRSTIE ALLEY

In *Look Who's Talking*, single mom Mollie Jensen (Kirstie Alley) wants a father for her infant son, Mikey. She goes around town, dating prospective dads, and can't seem to see the ideal guy who sits home baby-sitting her son. He's the cabbie man, James Ubriacco (John Travolta), who drove her to hospital when she went into labour, and stayed on after her baby was born, almost playing surrogate dad. But the routine love story acquires a new dimension as it is told through the infant's point of view. Baby Mikey has a voice-over by Bruce Willis to bring out the anomalies of the adult world. It can't get cuter than this.

## ▶ THE MASK

COMEDY | 1996 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: CHUCK RUSSEL | CAST: JIM CARREY, CAMERON DIAZ

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## ▶ ME, MYSELF & IRENE

COMEDY | 2000 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
PETER AND BOBBY FARRELLY
CAST:
JIM CARREY, RENEE ZELLWEGER

In this film, the Farrelly brothers indulge in their yen for scatological comedy – replete with gross gags and risqué jokes – after the box-office success of *There's Something About Mary*. But in this film, the pace flounders and jokes are limp. Charlie Baileygates (Jim Carrey), a sweet- tempered, Rhode Island state trooper, develops a split personality – his obnoxious, aggressive alter-ego Hank. Charlie doesn't seem to mind anything. He looks the other way when his wife walks out on him and later, leaves him with triplets fathered by her lover. But that's when Charlie's troubles begin. For, bottling up his feelings lead to the appearance of his alter-ego, bad guy Hank. He appears whenever Charlie almost cracks up under pressure. And when Charlie hooks up with innocent-looking Irene (Renee Zellweger), who too has a wild streak in her, things get complicated. For Charlie finds a rival in love – swaggering Hank– who too wants Irene, with her rosy cheeks, winsome pout and pizzazz. Crazy, quirky and quintessentially Carrey, *Me, Myself & Irene* can be seen both for cheerful Charlie and churlish Hank.

## ▶ MEET THE PARENTS

COMEDY | 2000 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JAY ROACH
CAST:
BEN STILLER, ROBERT DE NIRO, TERI POLO

In *Meet The Parents*, first and foremost, Greg Focker's name goes against him. But that's not the only disadvantage that he must encounter when he meets his prospective father-in-law, Jack Byrnes (Robert De Niro). The difficult, retired CIA operative who is a stickler for discipline seems to have taken an instant dislike to Greg, a male nurse, who wants to marry his daughter, Pam (Teri Polo), who is a schoolteacher. Ironically, everything that Greg does to appease Jack only antagonizes him further. Greg has to endure the family's troublesome pet, a potty-trained cat. Worse, he inadvertently drops the urn containing the ashes of Jack's mother. Unforgivable, huh! More so, as Jack, a doting father, isn't ready to accept another man in his daughter's life. The acrimony between Robert De Niro and Ben Stiller makes for some truly comic moments and more than make up for the paper-thin script.

## ▶ MEET THE FOCKERS

COMEDY | 2004 | ★★★½

The love story of Greg Focker (Ben Stiller) hasn't managed to end happily, despite the fact that he has already met his

DIRECTION:
JAY ROACH
CAST:
BEN STILLER, ROBERT DE NIRO, DUSTIN HOFFMAN, BARBARA STREISAND

prospective father-in-law (Robert De Niro) in the first film, *Meet The Parents*. In the sequel, *Meet The Fockers*, the distraught suitor has a more formidable task before him. He must introduce his prospective in-laws to his parents. Now, that's an ordeal because the Fockers – Greg and Roz (Dustin Hoffman, Barbara Streisand) – are unconventional parents. While mom Focker is a sex therapist who writes books like *Meet Your Orgasm*, dad Focker has been on paternity leave ever since Greg was born. There is chaos and fireworks when the uptight Jack Byrne (De Niro) tries to get acquainted with the unorthodox bohemians. De Niro is undoubtedly the show-stopper here.

## ▶ MEN IN BLACK

SCI-FI | 1997 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BARRY SONNEFELD | CAST: WILL SMITH, TOMMY LEE JONES

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## ▶ MR. BEAN'S HOLIDAY

COMEDY | 2007 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
STEVE BENDELACK
CAST:
ROWAN ATKINSON, WILLEM DAFOE, STEPHANIE DEBAC

In *Mr. Bean's Holiday*, Mr. Bean returns to the big screen with his beanbag full of contortions and confusions that have become legendary by now. It's a tryst with stir-fried French Beans this time as the all-English bumbler wins a trip to South of France — along with a camcorder — and decides to unleash his innocent charm on the French Riviera, even as Cannes Film Festival is on in full swing. But before he reaches the beach, he has bizarre experiences and is branded a dangerous kidnapper who has run away with a film director's son. But don't we know our Bean is all jelly inside; can't hurt a fly, unless it tries to steal his pastry? And that's a discovery they all have to make ... cops, the angry filmmaker, the pretty little actress who gives him a lift and the little lost boy who ends up finding a friend. This heartwarming tale of a loser who always ends up a winner is entertaining fare.

## ▶ MRS. DOUBTFIRE

COMEDY | 1993 | ★★★★

In *Mrs. Doubtfire*, the only way Daniel Hillard (Robin Williams), who is soon to-be-divorced, can spend more time with his

**DIRECTION:**
CHRIS COLUMBUS
**CAST:**
ROBIN WILLIAMS, SALLY FIELD, PIERCE BROSNAN
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

children is by disguising himself as a woman. He enters the home of his separated wife, Miranda (Sally Field), as Mrs. Doubtfire, ostensibly a Scottish nanny, who ends up becoming indispensable to the family. His wife, who had begun to regard him as the problem in her life – insensitive, uncaring – soon finds Mrs. Doubtfire an answer to all her woes, and confides even about her newly found romance with roguish Stuart (Pierce Brosnan). Miranda is completely fooled by Daniel's high-heeled, bosomy avatar. Somewhere behind layers of make-up, Daniel too re-discovers his sensitivity and is ready to connect with his family again, minus the make-up. It's essentially a family drama that, simultaneously, touches your heart and tickles your sense of humour. Watch out for Robin Williams' 'womanliness'.

## ▶ MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING

COMEDY | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JOEL ZWICK
**CAST:**
NIA VARDOLOS, JOHN CORBETT

When cultures clash, fireworks are inevitable. When Toula (Nia Vardolos), a hostess at her father's downtown Greek restaurant in Chicago, decides to marry her boyfriend, Ian Miller (John Corbett), life takes a sharp turn for the befuddled beau. Before he can marry his beloved, Ian must placate her father, Gus (Michael Constantine), who is appalled at the thought of welcoming a non-Greek into the proud Portokalos family fold. The only way Ian can prove that all that Gus holds dear – Greek rituals, traditions, fables and foibles – are not alien to him is by opting for a Greek wedding. Interestingly, the extended family *fundas* in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* stand out in sharp contrast to American brevity and create comic montages in this vibrant celebration of exotica.

## ▶ NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE

COMEDY | 1978 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN LANDIS
**CAST:**
JOHN BELUSHI, TIM MATHESON, JOHN VERNON, VERNA BLOOM

At Faber College, there are only two options. You can either join the uppity Omegas, a fraternity spilling over with pompous overachievers, who believe college is actually a place to study. Or you can sign up for Delta House, brimming over with underachievers who see college as an initiation into unbridled adulthood: wild beer parties, sleazy skirt-chasing, a diligent abstinence from books ... No prizes for guessing which House is more popular. But the Dean, Vernon Wormer (John Vernon), has just one mission: he has to clean up the campus and the only way he can do so, is to conspire with the accomplished Omegas to shut down the Deltas. However, he underestimates the power of Delta cheerleader, John "Bluto" Blutarsky (John Belushi), and his gang of social outcasts who follow just one rule: break all rules! A manic campus affair, *National Lampoon's Animal House* mirrors the indiscipline and anarchy that is an integral part of college life.

## ▶ NINE TO FIVE

COMEDY | 1980 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
COLIN HIGGINS
**CAST:**
JANE FONDA, LILY TOMLIN, DOLLY PARTON, DABNEY COLEMAN

*Nine To Five* is about serious business: gender discrimination, sexual harassment at the workplace, trauma of working mothers and the impregnable glass ceiling ... But it transmutes all this into a breezy comedy that carries the message more effectively and strikes a chord with every working woman. *Nine To Five* exposes the underbelly of corporate life through the travails of three secretaries who are fed up with the excesses of their chauvinistic boss, Franklin Hart (Dabney Coleman), and decide to give him a gender sensitization course. So, you have Judy (Jane Fonda), a woman who has just entered the 'pink-collar ghetto' after being dumped by her husband; Violet (Lily Tomlin), the Girl Friday, who is passed over for promotion despite doing all the dirty work for her boss; and Doralee (Dolly Parton) who has been taking sexual harassment as part of her office duty. It's a tangy trio that strikes back, gleefully and mercilessly.

## ▶ THE NUTTY PROFESSOR

COMEDY | 1996 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
TOM SHAYDAC
**CAST:**
EDDIE MURPHY, JADA PINKET SMITH
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

In *The Nutty Professor*, behind the loud humour and manic performance by Eddie Murphy in seven roles, there is a simple message about self-respect and inner beauty. Sweet. And funny too, specially since the antics of Professor Sherman Klump (Eddie Murphy), the grossly overweight scientist smitten with love, do not really tax your brain. The laid-back nerd suddenly wants to go for an image makeover when a hot chick, Carla Purty (Jada Pinket Smith), walks into his classroom and confesses she's his avid fan. In his desperation, he drinks a potion that has resulted in a miraculous genetic engineering in some hamsters. The potion also works on him physically, albeit temporarily. It transforms him into svelte and sexy Buddy Love, a Romeo, with an abrasive personality. Time for Professor Klump to return, but not before his alter ego has created havoc.

## ▶ THE ODD COUPLE

COMEDY | 1968 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GENE SAKS
**CAST:**
JACK LEMMON, WALTER MATTHAU

Neil Simon's popular Broadway hit found its way in movie halls through this rib-tickling celluloid version of two friends ending up as virtual enemies after they decide to share a New York apartment, despite their different personalities. In *The Odd Couple*, Oscar Madison (Walter Matthau) is an easy-going sports writer who lives alone – and untidily – in a Manhattan apartment. Things take a sudden turn when his friend, Felix Ungar (Jack Lemmon), who has been tossed out by his wife, joins him. Seems like the most natural thing among friends but for Ungar's obsession with cleanliness, order and discipline. The sparring between the oddballs creates a new benchmark in onscreen chemistry, even as it leaves you grinning.

## ▶ THE PINK PANTHER

COMEDY | 1963 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
BLAKE EDWARDS
**CAST:**
PETER SELLERS, DAVID NIVEN

*The Pink Panther* introduced bumbling Inspector Jacques Clouseau to Hollywood, a part Peter Sellers played time and again with great dexterity, until the 2006 sequel that featured Steve Martin in the eponymous role. In his debut venture, the Inspector is trying to nab a jewel thief, Sir Charles Lytton (David Niven), who is right under his nose. Naturally, clod-head Clouseau can't fathom the mystery of the man who dupes the world with two identities: Sir Charles, a suave playboy, and Phantom, an elusive jewel thief, who is carrying on an affair with Clouseau's wife. Despite a clumsy plot and a plethora of gags that do not always work, Peter Sellers holds the film together with his comic timing and quixotic charm.

## ▶ POLICE ACADEMY

COMEDY | 1984 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
HUGH WILSON
**CAST:**
STEVE GUTTENBERG, KIM CATRALL

Don't even go looking for a story in *Police Academy*. There isn't any except the fact that a bunch of misfits join a police academy as new recruits and are sent on a mission. They are told to control a riot in the city and the only way they can do it is by pitching in to defuse chaos with more chaos. Riddled with racist jokes and sexual innuendoes, the film spawned six sequels and two TV series, despite being labelled C-grade Hollywood. Naturally, something did work for viewers... go for the quixotic charm of the oddballs – the oversexed women, the trigger-happy guys – and their lowbrow sense of humour.

## ▶ RATATOUILLE

ANIMATION | 2007 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
BRAD BIRD
**CAST:**
VOICE OF PATTON OSWALT, LOU ROMANO

Paris is truly a dream city. In *Ratatouille*, it can make even a rat's strange dreams come true. Remy, a rat, fantasizes about gourmet cooking like his idol, Chef Gusteau, who had once declared, "Anyone Can Cook." There is also a poor garbage boy, Alfredo Linguini, who dreams of making it big in the restaurant business. *Ratatouille* is one of producer Pixar's best animation films. It follows Remy's adventures as he tries to play surrogate chef to Linguini, when he lands up in a once-famous Parisian eatery after being separated from his rat family. But Remy's fortunes are inextricably linked with that of Linguini after he accidentally creates a culinary marvel that is passed off as Linguini's handiwork. Together, they reinstate the eatery's lost glory and forge a rare friendship. However, it is after much hair tugging, scratching and biting that they learn how to communicate effectively. *Ratatouille*'s a delight for gourmets: go drool at the expertly presented Crepes Suzettes and Beef Bourguignon. Also, the splendid Paris backdrop gives the film a touch of class.

## ▶ RUSH HOUR

COMEDY | 1998 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
BRETT RATNER
**CAST:**
JACKIE CHAN, CHRIS TUCKER

Motormouth Chris Tucker teams up with stunt joker Jackie Chan to create some funny moments in this cops-and-robbers drama. The plot is never really important in a Jackie Chan film as the Hong Kong hero makes everything irrelevant with his panache for transforming the most death-defying action sequence into comedy. In *Rush Hour*, in terms of story, you have a one-liner: Inspector Lee (Jackie Chan) is sent to America to help rescue the daughter of the Chinese consul, being held hostage for a ransom of $50 million. He must work together with LAPD cop James Carter (Chris Tucker) who has been told to 'babysit' him in this new unfriendly terrain. Alas! Chan, the chopsocky champion, never needs babysitting, a bitter truth that the American cop soon learns. Good chemistry and a rib-tickling clash of culture make *Rush Hour* entertaining fare. Such is the film's popularity that it already has two sequels.

## ▶ SHANGHAI NOON

COMEDY | 2000 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
TOM DEY
**CAST:**
JACKIE CHAN, OWEN WILSON

*Shanghai Noon* is perfect popcorn fare. It may be a classic Wild West-meets-Far East flick with Jackie Chan reinterpreting John Wayne as Chon Wang, but the jokes are funny, the one-liners are smart and the laughs keep coming. Someone abducts Princess Pei Pei from the Forbidden City and holds her hostage in Nevada, along with a whole pack of Chinese slaves. The only person who can save her is Chong Wang (Jackie Chan), an Imperial Guard, who is invincible. Wang comes to America, carrying 2,000 years of tradition with him. Only to learn that the sun may rise in the East but it sets in the West. But that's just one lesson the Shanghai kid learns. Others include learning to ride a horse, to shoot a gun, to relax and to chill out in bordellos and bars. He learns these lessons from his newfound friend, Roy O'Bannon (Owen Wilson), a maverick gold runner, who smilingly encounters adverse situations. *Shanghai Noon* is a classic Western but twisted out of shape. However, with the film's irreverence, laced with wit, the light and breezy fare leaves you delighted.

## ▶ SOME LIKE IT HOT

COMEDY | 1959 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BILLY WILDER | CAST: MARILYN MONROE, TONY CURTIS, JACK LEMMON

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## ▶ THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY

COMEDY | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BOBBY FARRELLY, PETER FARRELLY
CAST:
BEN STILLER, CAMERON DIAZ, MATT DILLON

In *There's Something About Mary*, it has been 13 years since Ted's (Ben Stiller) disastrous prom night with his dream girl, Mary (Cameron Diaz). Now, he's no longer a gawky college boy who couldn't tuck himself in properly and ended up painfully between the zippers. But when it comes to Mary, there's still something about her that makes him nervous, edgy and awkward despite having arrived on the world stage as a successful writer. Still haunted by memories of Mary, he hires a private detective, Pat Healy (Matt Dillon), to ferret her out. But didn't we say there's something truly irresistible about Mary? The sleazy detective too flips for her and soon we have a hilarious triangle with two desperate suitors trying to impress Mary. Though the film is lowbrow, vulgar and scatological, it's outrageously funny too.

## ▶ THREE MEN AND A BABY

COMEDY | 1987 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
LEONARD NEMOY
CAST:
STEVE GUTTENBERG, TOM SELLECK, TED DANSON

Three men – Pete, an architect, Michael, a cartoonist and Jack, a movie star – lead a merry life as housemates in upmarket Manhattan apartment, with nothing to mar their carefree hedonism. But the carefree bachelor party is soon disrupted when the movie star's ex deposits his baby at their doorstep, with an acrimonious note, saying that she can't cope with single motherhood anymore. In *Three Men And A Baby*, can our three amigos cope with single fatherhood? It takes a virtual battle with dirty diapers, baby food and a bawling infant before they realize that, despite their bohemian ways, there's a caring dad inside them. A Hollywood adaptation of the French comedy, *Three Men And A Cradle*, the film is light-hearted and warm, with a winsome portrayal by the baby.

## ▶ TOOTSIE

COMEDY | 1982 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
SYDNEY POLLACK
CAST:
DUSTIN HOFFMAN, JESSICA LANGE

No one is ready to give actor Michael Dorsey (Dustin Hoffman) a role because his reputation of being difficult supersedes his talent. So, Dorsey thinks of a novel way to beat the blight. He disguises himself as a woman and auditions for female roles. He ends up winning toasts for his scintillating shows as Dorothy, a middle-aged New Yorker, but is on the verge of losing out on his love life. How does he tell his delectable co-star (Jessica Lange) about his burning passion for her, without arousing

suspicion and losing out on his newly acquired fame? More troublesome is the growing attraction that Jessica's father nurtures for the diva, Dorothy. Dustin in drag is absolutely sensational.

## ▶ WAG THE DOG

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
BARRY LEVINSON
**CAST:**
DUSTIN HOFFMAN, ROBERT DE NIRO, ANNE HECHE

A political satire, *Wag The Dog* has the President facing re-election, with the popular mandate in his favour, when suddenly a sex scandal breaks out. A dalliance with a firefly girl in the Oval office sees the President running for cover, while the spin-doctors work feverishly to control the damage. A two-man team, headed by Robert De Niro, seeks help from a Hollywood producer (Dustin Hoffman) who is told to construct a fake war scenario with Albania. "Politics is showbiz!" declares the producer and sets to work. A song for a war hero, a few shots of a small-time actress (Kirsten Dunst) escaping against a computer produced backdrop of a burning village, with a digitally monitored soundtrack of hysterical screams, and it's over. While America is crying for a dead hero – who is a deranged criminal (Woody Harrelson) – the world expects the superpower to save them from global terrorism and the President is assured of a second term. De Niro and Dustin Hoffman move from one ridiculous salvage operation to another. *Wag The Dog* is engrossing, even as it lays bare the frightening power of the media.

## ▶ THE WATERBOY

COMEDY | 1998 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
FRANK CORACI
**CAST:**
ADAM SANDLER, KATHY BATES, FAIRUZA BALK

Bobby Boucher (Adam Sandler) is 31, lives with his martinet mother (Kathy Bates), and doesn't really have much of a life as the official waterboy of the local football team. So what if he's dead serious about his job and describes himself as a water distribution engineer. The quintessential loser, he is quite used to being overlooked and ignored till his temper frays. Then, there's no holding back this human tornado. He graduates from waterboy to star tackler, only because of his explosive temper. However, his mother is totally against her 'little' son taking up

any task that would endanger him, just as she forbids him from romancing the tart who is just out of jail (Fairuza Balk). Sandler scripts a humorous tale of an underdog who ends up as a star.

## ▶ WEDDING CRASHERS

COMEDY | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
DAVID DOBKIN
**CAST:**
OWEN WILSON, VINCE VAUGHN, RACHEL MCADAMS

*Wedding Crashers* figures among the top US comedies of 2005. With its raunchy humour and wild escapades, the film's quite funny. Two bachelor buddies, John Beckwith and Jeremy Grey (Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn), try to get their chick-fill by gatecrashing weddings. Owen even tries to gatecrash a funeral, hoping to make-out with some pretty mourner. But tears and wet noses act as a dampener. The fun mounts when the two land up at the wedding of the daughter of the presidential candidate (Christopher Walken). Again, they try to get close to the bridesmaid and end up getting into serious business when the girls invite them over for a weekend to the family homestead. The family turns out to be absolutely whacko, with both daughters and the mother lusting after them. And if that isn't mad enough, the wedding crashers actually begin to think about real weddings – this time for themselves. Laughs all the way.

## ▶ YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN

COMEDY | 1974 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MEL BROOKS
**CAST:**
GENE WILDER, PETER BOYLE

Young Frederick Frankenstein (Gene Wilder) has a problem at hand in *Young Frankenstein*. He just can't seem to live down his family name, 'cause nobody can forget his grandfather, Dr. Victor von Frankenstein. So, the grandson returns to his ancestral home in the Bavarian castle, finds his grandfather's book, *How I Did It*, and tries to follow the simple instructions to create his own Frankenstein. Quite an easy task to make a monster, he feels, since all it entails is robbing a few graves and stealing a brain from the local brain store. So what if it's the brain of a certain Mr. AB normal (read, abnormal)? The rest is a rollicking trip as the monster (Peter Boyle) runs wild and the scientist can do little but fumble and fall. This is essentially a hilarious satire on *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein*, James Whale original horror films.

# 50 BEST CHILDREN'S FILMS

## ▶ A BUG'S LIFE

ANIMATION | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN LASSETER
CAST:
VOICES OF DAVE FOLEY, KEVIN SPACEY

The mighty grasshoppers come, take food and leave. And if they don't get food, they scream and squish their minions, ants, without a twinge of mercy. In *A Bug's Life*, that's the bitter truth of an ant's existence. Generations of ant colonies have waited for a hero to set them free...The hero is born but he's puny, insignificant, odd-man Flik (Dave Foley). But Flik's a winner and knows how to grow from zero to hero. All it takes is a strong will and a bit of help from a ragtag bunch of unemployed flea circus fellas. So what do we have here? An ant, a baby ant, spider, caterpillar, stick insect, moth and a pair of twin bugs who take up cudgels against grasshoppers, led by the inimical Hopper (Kevin Spacey). The pint-sized Dirty Dozens not only save the endangered ant colony but also unleash a revolution that changes class relations forever in the etymological world. *A Bug's Life*, with its simple plot and colourful animation, is pure kid's fare.

## ▶ BABE

DRAMA | 1995 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
CHRIS NOONAN
CAST:
JAMES CROMWELL, VOICE OF CHRISTINE CAVANAUGH
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Babe isn't an ordinary piglet. Unlike the rest of his breed, he dreams big and is determined to achieve his ambition. After his parents are sent to hog heaven, Babe must find his way on the Hogget farm. Now that's not an easy task specially when Farmer Hogget's wife keeps seeing a Christmas dinner of succulent roast pork whenever she sees Babe. And Babe, having been taken under the tutelage of a kind sheepdog, thinks he's a sheepdog. And since every dog has his day, Babe ultimately gets his day under the sun and emerges a hero in this winsome tale of friendship and camaraderie.

## ▶ BABY'S DAY OUT

COMEDY | 1994 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
PATRICK READ JOHNSON
CAST:
JOE MANTEGNA, LARA FLYN BOYLE

Baby Bink has never seen the outside world, except in his storybooks. Everything he knew of the big bad world that lay beyond the plush environs of his mansion was through colourful illustrations in his favourite bedtime book. However, it's this bookish knowledge that proves handy – a veritable guide for survival – when three ruthless thugs kidnap him for a ransom of $5 billion. The nine-month-old toddler outwits the bad guys, teaches them a lesson, negotiates the harsh city environs and returns home safe while his parent's fret and fume. In this slapstick comedy, the toddler's antics manage to bring the house down.

## ▶ BACK TO THE FUTURE

SCI-FI | 1985 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: ROBERT ZEMECKIS | CAST: MICHAEL J. FOX, LEA THOMPSON, CHRISTOPHER LLOYD

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## ▶ BAMBI

ANIMATED | 1942 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
DAVID HAND
CAST:
VOICE OF HARDIE ALBRIGHT, STAN ALEXANDER

Walt Disney's animated feature *Bambi* was made almost 50 years before *Lion King*, but it is almost as vibrant and endearing as *Lion King*. It's an enchanting tale of a deer cub that learns to survive in the jungle after a hunter shoots its mother. And like Simba, the royal cub in *Lion King*, Bambi too is hailed as a Prince by his fellow creatures and passes through infancy, adolescence and youth before the moment of reckoning. The hunters are back and the Prince must find hidden reserves of courage to protect his friends and family. An unbridled celebration of the age of innocence, *Bambi* is a classic entertainer.

## ▶ BATMAN

ACTION | 1989 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: TIM BURTON | CAST: MICHAEL KEATON, KIM BASINGER, JACK NICHOLSON

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## ▶ BIG DADDY

COMEDY | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: DENNIS DUGAN | CAST: ADAM SANDLER, JOEY LAUREN ADAMS, COLE SPROUSE

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## ▶ CARS

ANIMATION | 2006 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN LASSETER
CAST:
VOICE OF OWEN WILSON, PAUL NEWMAN, BONNIE HUNT

Rookies need to be tamed while superstars need to learn humility. That's the moral of *Cars*, a quaint fable of life in the fast lane versus life in the slow lane. It's the quintessential Hare and Tortoise story, mixed with 21st century pizzazz. The lessons of life that Pesky Lightning McQueen (Owen Wilson) learns aren't just *babalog* stuff. Of course, shiny cars and vrooming racetracks

excite the young imagination. But the efforts of a sleepy little car town to tame the cocky racing car as it loses its way while heading for the Californian racetracks are heartwarming adult fare. McQueen's encounters with Doc Hudson (Paul Newman) and the luminescent Porsche who moved over from glitzy L.A. to godforsaken Radiator Springs, off the interstate highway, are a teasing tale of development gone awry. During his stint with the rusted and outdated cars, McQueen learns to look beyond his shiny bonnet, something he'd never done before in his I-Me-Myself life. Who wants to get back to the competitive racetracks after taking a ride on Sunset Boulevard with a beloved in tow? A sweet little comedy that revs you up ...

## ▶ CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

DRAMA | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
TIM BURTON
**CAST:**
JOHNNY DEPP, HELENA BONHAM CARTER, FREDDIE HIGHMORE

You'll never forget him as Willy Wonka, the candy man in *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*. Because Johnny Depp's rendition of the weird chocolatier is the loudest, most exaggerated, most dramatic Wacko Jacko act till now. And it's this larger-than-life (read, over-the-top) quirkiness of Tim Burton's adaptation of the Roald Dahl classic that makes it simply riveting. The film retells Dahl's joyous morality tale about good children versus bad children, poor children versus spoilt, rich, brattish kids and family versus me-centrism. But when it comes to style and narration, Burton dispenses Dahl's simplicity for the grandiose effect. If young Charlie's (Freddie Highmore) decrepit hovel becomes the most romantic *jhuggi jhopri* you've ever seen, Willy Wonka's chocolate factory is absolutely *fundoo*: a mix of magic and machine that creates a post-modern Wonderland where Charlie and the four evil kids are invited to test their goodness quotient. Add to this, Willy Wonka's memories of a repressed childhood and his awkwardness with normal emotions and you have a film you can rush your kids to.

## ▶ CHICKEN RUN

ANIMATION | 2000 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PETER LORD, NICK PARK
**CAST:**
VOICE OF MEL GIBSON, JULIA SAWALHA

Mr. Tweedy's chicken farm is essentially a synonym for Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Chicken Run* is a tale about freedom and revolution. Threatened by a future that would reduce them to chicken pies, the cackling bunch of oversized chicks in a chicken farm are determined to fly over the barbed coop. Egging them on is the diehard, determined, dogged hen, Ginger (voiced by Julia Sawalha), an archetype of the feminist-activist who believes there is a hill full of lush grass, somewhere beyond. But chickens are chickens, incomplete without a rooster. Life perks up when Rocky, the cocky rooster, falls into their coop and fills them with his cock and bull stories about freedom and flight. The life of the film is its animation and Mel Gibson. Lending his voice to Rocky, the carefree Yankee, he creates a *Braveheart*-meets-*Lethal*

*Weapon*-meets-love story that transforms *Chicken Run* into something more substantial than chicken feed.

## ▶ DR. DOLITTLE

COMEDY | 1998 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
BETTY THOMAS
**CAST:**
EDDIE MURPHY, OLIVER PLATT

John Dolittle (Eddie Murphy), a doctor, is on the verge of striking a rich deal when an accident occurs in which he hits a dog and begins to hear him speak. The beleaguered doctor suddenly remembers his childhood disability (read, ability), in which he could talk to animals and understand them. Suddenly, his life changes, with his house being transformed into a menagerie as various animals flock there, considering him as their family physician. Meanwhile, Dolittle's family fears he's going mad, even as the deal – and Dolittle's dreams of becoming rich – begins to slip from his hands. But the doctor isn't unduly worried for he's found what was earlier missing in his life: a purpose and the desire to heal. In *Dr. Dolittle*, though some jokes are crude, there is loads of drama in Dolittle's animated conversation with animals.

## ▶ DR. DOLITTLE 2

COMEDY | 2001 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVE CARR
**CAST:**
EDDIE MURPHY, KRISTEN WILSON AND CREATURES

Dr. Dolittle can actually do a lot. He can make merry with his bunch of critters and can make you merry too. All this without much ado. Of course, there's a bit of philosophy: Save the world, environment, nature and wildlife ... The doctor's menagerie is an eclectic mix of creatures big and small. Heading the band is Archie, a showbiz bear, who loves to sing, dance and show off. His traits work before a city-bred audience. But back in the jungle, the wild ones snigger and boo at his spoilt city ways. "Be a Bear!" says the beautiful, untamed Ava (voice of Lisa Kudrow) and walks off waddling her bountiful behind. Obviously, Archie has a problem at hand. For Archie must woo Ava before he can mate with her and save the endangered species. The forest cover is fast falling prey to greedy-sleazy contractors, real-estate managers and timber merchants. So what does Archie do? He turns to Dr. Dolittle to rediscover his forgotten bearhood. The doctor must teach him to hibernate in caves, swim in rapids and search for the proverbial pot of honey in the bustling beehive. *Dr. Dolittle 2* is breezy fun and games.

## ▶ DUNSTON CHECKS IN

COMEDY | 1996 | ★★★

There's a lot of monkey business in the Majestic Hotel when a new guest checks in. The plush hotel is on the verge of losing its reputation due to the antics of Dunston, the rumbustious

DIRECTION:
KEN KWAPIS
CAST:
JASON ALEXANDER, FAYE DUNAWAY, ERIC LLOYD

orangutan. He is smuggled into the hotel by a guest, much to the discomfiture of the harassed manager (Jason Alexander) who must ensure the smooth functioning of the hotel. Dunston's young son (Eric Lloyd) is the only one who can tame him and ensure there are no snafus during the hotel's official inspection. In *Dunston Checks In*, the orangutan ends up as the star of this monkey caper.

## ▶ E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

SCI-FI | 1982 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: HENRY THOMAS, DREW BARRYMORE, DEE WALLACE

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## ▶ FINDING NEMO

ANIMATION | 2003 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ANDREW STANTON, LEE UNKRICH
CAST:
VOICE OF ALBERT BROOKS, ALEXANDER GOULD
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ANIMATED FEATURE.

It's a big bad world out there, forewarns Dad Merlin (Albert Brooks), but the pesky little Nemo is unlikely to follow his father's sage advice. Like other friendly neighbourhood kids, he is bitten by the adventure bug and dreams of discovering what lies beyond. But Dad's words ring true when Nemo, the weak-finned clownfish, is snatched away from his deep-sea haven by a diver and imprisoned in a fish tank in Sydney. It's time for timid little Nemo to ferret out hidden reserves of courage and plan his escape with Gill (Willem Dafoe), his newfound buddy-in-captivity. And it's time for Dad Merlin to be brave too and set out into the distant seas in search of his son. Joining him in his search is his lively companion, the forgetful blue Royal Tang fish, Doris (Ellen DeGeneres), but the journey is fraught with danger. An exhilarating story on family values and the father-son bond, *Finding Nemo* raises animation to a new high.

## ▶ FINDING NEVERLAND

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
MARC FORSTERS
CAST:
JOHNNY DEPP, KATE WINSLET, JULIE CHRISTIE
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Johnny Depp works his magic in *Finding Neverland*. As James Barrie, author of immortal *Peter Pan*, Depp's performance unfolds largely in undertones. Set against old world England, *Finding Neverland* traces the growing friendship between Barrie and his neighbour, a widow (Kate Winslet), who struggles to bring up her family of five boys single-handedly. She has her mother (Julie Christie) who pitches in, but it is Barrie's emotional support that helps the family through trying times. And what does Barrie get in return? Inspiration for his classic play *Peter Pan* that opens to rave reviews in a stiff-upper-lip London that has never before seen a play about fairies, pirates and a boy who refuses to grow up. The joys and sorrows of the Davies' family are interwoven in the play, so that Neverland becomes a state of mind where the new family finds happiness. Depp has to give up his marriage, and Winslet suffers societal scorn with befitting

dignity. It's a lyrical film that celebrates the value of innocence in a world that seems to be fast losing out to despair.

## ▶ FREE WILLY

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
SIMON WINCER
**CAST:**
JASON JAMES RICHTER, KEIKO, THE WHALE

In *Free Willy*, 12-year-old Jesse has no idea what home is like, having lived in a children's home after having been abandoned by his mother. Life changes when Jesse is adopted by foster parents who try to introduce some order into his life. But his only friend is Willy, an Orca whale, who lives in a tank in the local aquatic park. Jesse and Willy are soul mates and share the same air of sullenness. While Jesse is suspicious of his new surroundings, Willy has stopped performing for visitors. The dysfunctional duo helps each other to get over their trauma, even as Jesse ends up saving the endangered whale from impending doom. *Free Willy* is great family viewing.

## ▶ HAPPY FEET

ANIMATION | 2006 | ★★★ ½

**DIRECTION:**
GEORGE MILLER
**CAST:**
VOICE OF ROBIN WILLIAMS, HUGH JACKMAN, NICOLE KIDMAN, ELIJAH WOOD
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ANIMATED FEATURE.

Sweet and smart, the film's familiar theme of 'belonging' fills you with a sense of familiarity. It's the message about finding your identity and conserving the planet that makes *Happy Feet* so engrossing. There are some stunning visuals in this tale of an oddball penguin who tries to find his destiny in the cold Artic regions. Mumble isn't like the rest of his colony. He can't sing, even though he can feel a million songs in his heart. But he can dance. And dancing is seen as a handicap in a world of strange webbed feet. So Mumble must find his friends – a bunch of shorter, more stubby penguins – and seek *gyan* at the feet of the weird Penguin Guru (Robin Williams). He does this even as he fights off killer seals and predatory birds who have a predilection for penguin sausage. Add to this the strange breed of aliens who are drawing out all the fish from the ocean and threatening the bird colony with a food crisis, and you have a story that's happy yet sad, kiddish yet adult. And no prizes for guessing who the wicked aliens are.

## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

FANTASY | 2001 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS
**CAST:** DANIEL RADCLIFFE, ALAN RICKMAN, EMMA WATSON

Harry Potter comes to town, and how! Complete with wizardry, hocus-focus and make-believe that makes *Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone* such a mesmerizing film. From the very first shot when giant Hagrid walks into the Muggles' home and rescues Harry from his underdog existence, to the final confrontation with wicked Voldemort and evil Professor Snape, Harry Potter is fantasy at its riveting best. Hogwarts for young wizards is the school you desperately want to visit, even as esoteric courses of potion-making, broom-flying and wand-wielding make real-life school syllabi utterly boring. As for the game of Quidditch – now when can our friendly neighbourhood stadium host something so fantastic? The film's beauty lies not only in its computer-generated supra-normal effects, but also in the characterizations. Harry and his friends, super-smart Hermione and the somewhat nerdish Ron Weasly, are a treat to watch.

## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** CHRIS COLUMBUS | **CAST:** DANIEL RADCLIFFE, EMMA WATSON |
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## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

FANTASY | 2004 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** ALFONSO CUARON
**CAST:** DANIEL RADCLIFFE, EMMA WATSON, GARY OLDMAN, EMMA THOMPSON

In *Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban*, Harry is a teenager, prey to teenage angst. Blame it on his raging hormones. However, unlike friends Ron and Hermione, he hasn't found his love yet. The film opens with an angry Harry who causes his troublesome Aunt to inflate and float away. And he is overcome with rage as he battles a battery of new enemies. That's where the film's USP lies. It shows a darker underworld, with many beasts and demons that are hell-bent on removing the good out of Muggleworld. And the only way they can do so is by weakening the power of the Wizard world. So, you have Dementors sucking out the soul of Potter with their kiss of death. Werewolves threaten to sink their teeth into his flesh while Rat-Man, who first betrayed his father, now intends to betray him. And there is the mysterious Sirius Black whose credentials appear murky. Specially when the professor of Divination (Emma Thomson) keeps looking into her crystal ball and making dire predictions about his death. Add to this Hogwarts' Bratpack – Malfoy and Inc. – and you have a seething cauldron of treachery and death-round-the-corner. Does it work? Superbly!

## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

DRAMA | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** MIKE NEWELL
**CAST:** DANIEL RADCLIFFE, EMMA WATSON, RUPERT GRINT, RALPH FIENNES

If you thought Harry Potter comes of age in *The Half-Blood Prince*, think again. For in *Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire*, he loses his playfulness and gets all awkward and adolescent. It's a dark, moody, autumnal look at the mysteries and magical spells that lie between the walls of Hogwarts, with its eclectic mix of good and bad students, evil and benign wizards, pro and anti-Voldemort-ers. But the film's scariest part is its climax when He Who Shall Not Be Named arises in the form of Ralph Fiennes who plays Voldemort with such unbridled vile that he's mesmerizing. There's lightning, wind, mist, hellish music, a smoky cauldron and a helpless Harry who watches the evil unfold, as he lies impaled on a stake like a New Age Christ. The entire film is one long Triwizard tournament, with an overkill of spells, monsters and macabre moments. Nevertheless, it's breathtaking in places, especially when Harry battles monsters and emerges victorious. Also, it highlights team spirit, ethics and sacrifice in a world where competition is the rule and success the buzzword.

## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** DAVID YATES
**CAST:** DANIEL RADCLIFFE, RUPERT GRINT, EMMA WATSON

"What's happening to me?" yells Potter, sending the avuncular Dumbledore and his faithful friends, Ron and Hermione, into a tizzy. "Why am I always angry? I feel I'm turning BAD!" he exclaims, setting the tone for *Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix*. Welcome to Harry, the harried teen, who knows life's not going to be easy. Bigger issues are at stake as You Know Who and his army threaten the wizard world. In keeping with the film's tone, the world has become dark and grim. There is no fun left in the corridors of Hogwarts as young wizards and witches try to gear for the battle that looms ahead. Adding to the students' woes is the fact that the venal head, Dolores Umbridge (Imelda Staunton), has replaced Dumbledore. Umbridge is the stuff nightmares are made of. Despite her powder pink attire and a room full of kitties, she is a terror who plies students with painful tasks and enforces a rigid discipline. But she fails to teach students the Defense Against the Dark Arts, leaving them to form a covert body, the Dumbledore Army, and hold secret classes under Harry. And though there is the usual fare of charms, spells and special effects, Umbridge, who is meanness incarnate, is the scene-stealer.

## ▶ HOME ALONE 1 & 2

COMEDY | 1990 & 1992 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** CHRIS COLUMBUS | **CAST:** MACAULEY CULKIN, JOE PESCI, DANIEL STERN

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## ▶ ICE AGE

ANIMATION | 2002 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
CHRIS WEDGE
CAST:
VOICE OF RAY ROMANO, JOHN LEGUIZAMO, DENIS LEARY

It all begins with a harried squirrel trying to find his acorn and leads up to an eventful adventure for an animal trio at the dawn of the Ice Age. With news of an impending doom in *Ice Age*, all animals scurry towards the south, to escape the chill. But Manfred, the woolly mammoth, Sid the sloth and Diego, the sabretooth tiger, cannot join them before fulfilling the mission at hand. They must return a lost human baby to his tribe, before ice covers the area. With stunning visuals and a dramatic pace, this animated feature is an effective family pep pill.

## ▶ THE INCREDIBLES

ANIMATION | 2004 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BRAD BIRD
CAST:
CRAIG T. NELSON, HOLLY HUNTER, SAMUEL L. JACKSON
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ANIMATED FEATURE.

Incredible animation and super enjoyment: here's perfect family fun. In *The Incredibles*, you see a new superhero that isn't Superman or Batman. In fact , you get to see a whole family of them: Mr. Incredible who cannot be surpassed in strength, Elastigirl who stretches even beyond your imagination and a bunch of Superkids who can save both themselves and the world. The family Incredibles is forced to lead a normal life due to a new law that forces superheroes to blend in with society. But the family is forced to use its superpowers when the First World is threatened by a bandit who dreams of world domination and unleashes a manic robot. Loads of special effects and great action add to the film's thrill quotient.

## ▶ JURASSIC PARK

SCI-FI | 1993 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: SAM NEILL, LAURA DERN, JEFF GOLDBLUM, RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH

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## ▶ THE LION KING

ANIMATION | 1994 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ROGER ALLERS, ROB MINKOFF | CAST: VOICE OF MATTHEW BRODERICK, JAMES EARL JONES, JEREMY IRONS, MOIRA KELLY

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## ▶ LORD OF THE RINGS: FELLOWSHIP OF THE RINGS

ACTION | 2001 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: PETER JACKSON | CAST: ELIJAH WOOD, SEAN ASTIN, VIGGO MORTENSEN, IAN MCKELLEN

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## ▶ LORD OF THE RINGS: TWO TOWERS

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: PETER JACKSON | CAST: ELIJAH WOOD, VIGGO MORTENSEN, IAN MCKELLEN

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## ▶ LORD OF THE RING: RETURN OF THE KING

DRAMA | 2003 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
PETER JACKSON
**CAST:**
VIGGO MORTENSEN, IAN MCKELLEN, ELIJAH WOOD, LIV TYLER
**AWARDS:**
11 OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

J. R. R. Tolkien's epical clash between good and evil – almost biblical in intent – ends with *Lord Of The Ring: Return Of The King*. Peter Jackson skillfully uses New Zealand's rare beauty to create the mystique of Middle Earth. Imaginatively, he creates a whole range of living species – Hobbits, elves, orgs and wizards. Hobbits Frodo Baggins and Sam must save the human race or else ... The director almost hijacks you and throws you into the vortex of a battlefield where survival depends on individual valour. Or else, you find yourself on the edge of a precipice with Frodo, trying to find out who the traitor is – co-Hobbit Sam or crazy Gollum. The Trilogy ends with the battle before Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) becomes king and the Age of Man begins. Sauron's forces have attacked Gondor's capital in his final siege against mankind. Gandalf desperately tries to re-establish the equilibrium of Middle Earth, to coronate Aragorn as King, and to give Frodo a chance to complete his quest by returning the Ring. While travelling across treacherous enemy terrain, Frodo must rely increasingly on Sam and Gollum as the Ring continues to test his allegiance and, ultimately, his humanity. Not to be missed.

## ▶ MARY POPPINS

COMEDY | 1964 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT STEVENSON
**CAST:**
JULIE ANDREWS, DICK VAN DYKE
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (JULIE ANDREWS).

It's London in the early 1900s. Life is rather bland for kids left to fend for themselves by overworked and socially active parents. Almost every family needs a supernanny, but only Jane and Michael get lucky when magical Mary Poppins (Julie Andrews) lands in their chaotic household one day. Ever since she floats into their life, using her parasol as a parachute, the ebullient woman transforms their life. It becomes one long carnival of song and dance, even as Mary Poppins tries to instill some order into the chaos around. Aiding her is her chimney sweep buddy, Bart (Dick Van Dyke), who shows them how to be free and fun loving, a lesson the stressed-out parents must also learn. To date, *Mary Poppins* remains a classic children's film and should form an integral part of growing up.

## ▶ THE MASK

COMEDY | 1996 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: CHUCK RUSSEL | CAST: JIM CARREY, CAMERON DIAZ

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## ▶ MODERN TIMES

DRAMA | 1934 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: CHARLES CHAPLIN | CAST: CHARLES CHAPLIN

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## ▶ THE PRINCESS DIARIES

DRAMA | 2001 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
GARRY MARSHALL
CAST:
JULIE ANDREWS, ANNE HATHAWAY

Behind every bespectacled girl lies a beauty. So says the fairy tale. And everybody loves a fairy tale. Even though they may be hackneyed, worn out and absolutely untrue. Gary Marshall revisits the fairy tale in *Princess Diaries*. The glorious metamorphosis of Mia Thermopolis (Anne Hathaway) from a gawky teenager with freckles and spectacles to a stunning princess with *savoir faire* is almost an Eliza Dolittle makeover. The taming of Mia becomes almost similar and involves a string of visits to the beauty parlour, followed by a course in a finishing school. The pangs, perils and pitfalls of moving from mediocrity to royalty are all there as the 16-year-old schoolgirl from San Francisco prepares for her new role as Queen of Genovia, under the tutelage of her grandmother, Queen Clarisse Renaldi (Julie Andrews).

## ▶ RATATOUILLE

ANIMATION | 2007 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: BRAD BIRD | CAST: VOICE OF PATTON OSWALT, LOU ROMANO

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## ▶ SHREK

COMEDY | 2001 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ANDREW ADAMSON
CAST:
VOICE OF MIKE MYERS, EDDIE MURPHY, CAMERON DIAZ, JOHN LITHGOW
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ANIMATED FEATURE.

Shrek's a shriek, not just a scream. He is the most beautiful ogre that ever walked across the silver screen. Why? Because he has a heart of gold and has been slickly packaged. Living in a swamp, he wants to build a huge wall around his home. But before that, he must ward off the various squatters: three blind mice, Red Riding Hood's wolf, Seven Dwarfs, Robin Hood and many others displaced by the rapacious Lord Farquaad. The only way Shrek can save his land is to accept Lord Farquaad's proposal. He must save Princess Fiona from the fearsome dragon and bring her to Farquaad. Easier said than done. For ogres have hearts. And friends who can double up as philosophers and guides despite being a donkey. Here, we are

talking about the smartest ass (Eddie Murphy) in tinsel town. He not only rewrites the archetypal fairy tale but also achieves the impossible. In *Shrek*, he tames the fire-spewing dragon and transforms her into a mushy she-dragon in love. As for Princess Fiona, she's a new-millennium girl who can kick ass and also croon for her Prince Charming. End result? Loads of fun and a brand new end to the tired and tested fairy tale: "And they lived Ugly (and happy) ever after." Amen!

## ▶ SHREK 2

ANIMATION | 2004 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ANDREW ADAMSON, KELLY ASBURY
**CAST:**
MIKE MYERS, EDDIE MURPHY, CAMERON DIAZ

So Shrek has slain the dragon and freed the Princess with a kiss. But the kiss that is supposed to come from Prince Charming (Rupert Everett) came from an ogre instead. End result? The petite princess Fiona (Cameron Diaz) is now a tall green ogre too. Doesn't really matter since the two are in love and the lonely ogre is now domesticated and married. But will Fiona's parents accept their unconventional son-in-law with his uncouth ways? Have fun as King Harold (John Cleese) and Queen Lillian (Julie Andrews) overcome their culture shock and get used to Mr. and Mrs. Ogre. The drama in Part 2 largely lies in the introduction of a new character, Puss in Boots (Antonio Banderas), a hit man who has been hired by the King to get Shrek out of the way and give his daughter to the Prince. But Puss switches sides and actually wants the Ogre's romance to end happily ever after. Banderas' Puss, with the Spanish accent, is amusingly animated and gets some of the biggest laughs.

## ▶ SHREK 3

ANIMATION | 2007 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
RAMAN HUI, CHRIS MILLER
**CAST:**
VOICE OF MIKE MYERS, CAMERON DIAZ, EDDIE MURPHY

The green ogre is back, but this time he's fidgety and nervous with his impending fatherhood and kingship of Far Far Away, the fairy tale kingdom of his father-in-law who dies after anointing him king. Shrek is ready for neither. But while he can't wish fatherhood away (Fiona would never forgive him), he can pass over the kingship to the next kin. So what if it happens to be high school 'loser' Artie (Justin Timberlake)? All it needs is a bit of convincing and loads of browbeating. Then, Shrek has his best buddies, Donkey (Eddie Murphy), and Puss in Boots (Antonio Banderas), to help him in the arduous mission. The animation is state-of-the-art. The characters are funky, specially the female fairy tale brigade (Snow White, Rapunzel and the rest) who appear as disgruntled, bored, bitchy bimbettes.

## ▶ SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

ANIMATION | 1937 | ★★★★

*Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*, based on a fairy tale by the Grimm brothers, comes to life on a vibrant canvas that hasn't

DIRECTION:
DAVID HAND
CAST:
VOICE OF ADRIANA CASELOTTI, HARRY STOCKWELL

been dulled by the ravages of time. Walt Disney's animated film on the adventures of Snow White, who needed to be kissed back to life by Prince Charming, remains fresh and riveting even today. The Wicked Queen, with her poisonous apple, can still send a chill down your spine and make your heart go out to the vulnerable princess. With its classic songs, unforgettable dwarfs and the glint of evil, *Snow White* is mandatory viewing for every kid. And adult.

## ▶ THE SOUND OF MUSIC

DRAMA | 1965 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ROBERT WISE | CAST: JULIE ANDREWS, CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER

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## ▶ SPIDER-MAN

ACTION | 2002 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: SAM RAIMI | CAST: TOBEY MAGUIRE, KIRSTEN DUNST, WILLEM DAFOE

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## ▶ STUART LITTLE

COMEDY | 1999 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROB MINKOFF
CAST:
GEENA DAVIS, HUGH LAURIE, VOICE OF MICHAEL J FOX

*Stuart Little* is crisp, cute, clean and clearly one of the best films for kids, in league with *Lion King, Mask* and *Home Alone 1*. Moreover, it is an ode to the family unit. It's a tribute to quintessential moms and dads who do all the caring, sharing, loving and giving. It shows how goodness can make even habitual enemies– a cat and a mouse– friends forever. So many messages, so sweetly told, that's the beauty of this film. Manoj Night Shyamalan's script does all this without losing the edge of entertainment. Stuart, the newest member of the Little Family, is a torpedo of fun and games as he almost drowns in the washing machine, nearly gets 'scratched out' by street cats, and sails a boat despite all attempts at sabotage. More than all this, Stuart's a little hero who stands up to street bullies and fighter cats who end up whimpering before his all-brain-no-brawn show. *Stuart Little* is perfect vacation fare for all ages.

## ▶ STUART LITTLE 2

COMEDY | 2002 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROB MINKOFF
CAST:
GEENA DAVIS, VOICE OF MICHAEL J FOX, MELANIE GRIFFITH

The rodent, with an above-average human IQ, returns with his saga of fun and adventure. Stuart, now a well-entrenched member of the Little household, is suffering from pangs of loneliness. Brother George is busy with football and basketball games in which Stuart is too little to participate. As for Snowbell, the pet cat, she's too lazy, too fat and too much of an animal for our Boy Rat to play with. So what does Stuart do? He goes into a blue funk and waits for his own special friend, even

as Dad Little gives him some guy talk about growing up and all that adult business. Who's Stuart's new friend? Sweet little Margulo who is a canary trapped in the feathered underworld. Despite her perfect manners and petite form, Margulo is actually the Falcon's hench-girl: doing all his dirty work which includes stealing glittering diamonds from urbane New York City homes. Margulo needs a hero to free her from the Bad Bird's claws and lonely Stuart becomes her knight in shining armour, even as he becomes a victim himself. Yup! This time, the canary steals his mousy heart and transforms him into a love-stricken teenager. A roller-coaster ride through the high and lows of Manhattan, *Stuart Little 2* is perfect family entertainment.

## ▶ SUPERMAN

ACTION | 1978 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: RICHARD DONNER | CAST: CHRISTOPHER REEVES, MARLON BRANDO, GENE HACKMAN, MARGOT KIDDER

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## ▶ TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

DRAMA | 1962 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: ROBERT MULLIGAN | CAST: GREGORY PECK, MARY BADHAM

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## ▶ TOY STORY

ANIMATION | 1995 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN LASSETER
CAST:
VOICE OF TOM HANKS, TIM ALLEN

A delightful tale about friendship, *Toy Story* is a stylish buddy movie. Its first-rate, computer-generated animation transforms the toys into interesting hip characters. Also, Tom Hanks voice-over for the film's main protagonist, Woody, the wooden Cowboy, is remarkable. Woody knows it's time to walk off into the sunset when he is no longer the favourite toy in six-year-old Andy's toy gallery. Usurping Woody's place is the upstart Buzz Lightyear, a swanky, battery-operated Space Ranger. But our Cowboy isn't ready for retirement yet. Overcome with jealousy, he tries to oust Buzz from centre stage and ends up accidentally throwing him out. The only way he can absolve himself is to

bring Buzz back. It's the beginning of an adventure that sees sworn enemies turn into friends as they try to escape the wrath of a delinquent toy, hell-bent on destroying them. Great fun.

## ▶ TOY STORY 2

ANIMATION | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: JOHN LASSETER
CAST: VOICE OF TOM HANKS, TIM ALLEN AND JOAN CUSACK

Let the Toys do the talking. Woody, Buzz Lightyear and Jessie. They do it loud. They do it strong. And they do it well. Yup! Somebody's got it wrong somewhere. Sequels aren't supposed to be better than the original. But not only is *Toy Story 2* better, it also works at many levels. It's funny, great to look at, and entertaining – not just for kids but also for their dads and moms. Watch Woody (Tom Hanks) being saved by his friends Buzz and Co. after he is stolen by a toy collector and about to be shipped to a museum in Japan.

## ▶ THE TRANSFORMERS

SCI-FI | 2007 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MICHAEL BAY | CAST: SHIA LABEOUF, MEGAN FOX
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## ▶ WIZARD OF OZ

DRAMA | 1939 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: VICTOR FLEMING
CAST: JUDY GARLAND, FRANK MORGAN, RAY BOLGER
AWARDS: TWO OSCARS.

*Wizard Of Oz* is generally regarded as the best-loved classic in American cinema. The adventures of Dorothy Gale (Judy Garland) in the magical world of Oz are the stuff legends are made of. Dorothy, like every young person, dreams of someday going over the rainbow in search of magical lands and amazing adventures to counter the tedium of real life. One stormy day, Dorothy gets her chance when a tornado strikes the house where she lives with her uncle and aunt. Dorothy becomes unconscious but when she wakes up – or is she still asleep? – she finds herself in Oz, battling the Wicked Witch of the West with her friends, the Tin Man, the Scarecrow and the Cowardly Lion. With them, she sets out to search for the friendly Wizard (Frank Morgan) who will help her reach home. Home, where warmth and safety lie. The musical, an evergreen tale on the tumultuous journey from childhood to adulthood, strikes a chord with everyone.

# 50 BEST TEEN FILMS

## ▶ 10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU

COMEDY | 1999 | ★★★ ½

**DIRECTION:**
BILL JUNGER
**CAST:**
HEATH LEDGER, JULIA STILES

*10 Things I Hate About You* is a well-crafted, modern version of Shakespeare's *Taming Of The Shrew*. Kat (Julia Stiles) and Bianca (Larissa Oleynik) may be siblings, but the two sisters are completely different in their temperament and attitude. While Bianca is an extrovert, Kat is the quintessential rebel without a cause and is unable to connect with anybody at school. Since Bianca cannot date until her sister does, Bianca's boyfriends must find a suitable boy for the shrew. They convince local bad boy, Patrick (Heath Ledger), to tame the iron maiden, but plans go awry when the tough guy actually falls in love with her. A compelling performance by Julia Stiles and some great chemistry between the tamer and the shrew make the film entertaining.

## ▶ 13 GOING ON 30

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GARY WINICK
**CAST:**
JENNIFER GARNER, MARK RUFFALO

In *13 Going On 30*, Jennifer Garner tries a Tom Hanks (remember *Big*?). The film traces the adventures of a 13-year-old who is tired of being dowdy, flat-chested and without a boyfriend. She makes a desperate wish on her 13th birthday and, with a bit of magic dust, ends up as a glamorous magazine editor in Manhattan. Now, it's all hers for the taking: the great Bridget Jones' *bandobast* of boys, parties, sex and super fun. But is the successful singleton's life actually something to die for? Soon, Ms. grown-too-soon begins to miss the simple pleasures of life, including her best friend (Mark Ruffalo), from schooldays. A sweet fantasy that lacks the bite of *Big*, the film's just a pleasant look at teenage angst.

## ▶ ALMOST FAMOUS

DRAMA | 2000 | ★★★ ½

**DIRECTION:**
CAMERON CROWE
**CAST:**
KATE HUDSON, FRANCES MCDORMAND, PATRICK FUGIT
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

Almost all teen films are essentially a coming-of-age story of a bunch of hyperactive youngsters. However, *Almost Famous* is a coming-of-age story with a difference. Sixteen-year-old William gets the chance of a lifetime when he gets an assignment to write an article for Rolling Stones on the popular '70s band, Stillwaters. Moving out for the first time from his mother's (Frances McDormand) overprotective shadow, he gets to travel with the band and discover the rough and tumble of the '70s pop scene: drugs, sex, unbridled independence, creativity and disdain for authority and discipline. In such a volatile scenario, William must make his choices – and find love with the group guitarist's girl (Kate Hudson) – that will determine his future. A nostalgic look at the '70s music scene, *Almost Famous* has a powerful script and some high-octane drama.

## ▶ AMERICAN BEAUTY

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: SAM MENDES | CAST: KEVIN SPACEY, ANNETTE BENING

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## ▶ AMERICAN GRAFFITI

DRAMA | 1973 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: GEORGE LUCAS | CAST: RICHARD DREYFUSS, RONNY HOWARD, PAUL LE MATT, CHARLES MARTIN SMITH

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## ▶ AMERICAN PIE

COMEDY | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
PAUL WEITZ
CAST:
JASON BIGGS, CHRIS KLEIN, TARA REID, SHANNON ELIZABETH, EUGENE LEVY, MENA SUVARI

In *American Pie,* four high school students realize that it's the end of their senior year and they still have not learnt life's most important lesson. They are ignorant about sex. It's a desperate situation that needs to be addressed immediately. With time running out, they decide to finish their schooling on prom night by losing their virginity. But finding girlfriends isn't easy for the socially inept foursome. They are an odd assortment, with just one thing in common: they don't know how to connect with the opposite sex. Sometimes, understanding parents help, as in the case of Eugene Levy who tries to teach his son, Jason Biggs, about the birds and bees through magazines like *Hustler.* Doesn't really help in terms of sex education, but definitely adds to the film's hilarity. Rude, crude and vulgar it might be, but this teen sex comedy is definitely funny because it mirrors the awkwardness that most teenagers feel at their first sexual encounter.

## ▶ BACK TO THE FUTURE

SCI-FI | 1985 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: ROBERT ZEMECKIS | CAST: MICHAEL J. FOX, LEA THOMPSON, CHRISTOPHER LLOYD

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## ▶ BECAUSE I SAID SO

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★

DIRECTION: MICHAEL LEHMANN
CAST: DIANE KEATON, MANDY MOORE, GABRIEL MACHT

Overbearing, interfering, meddlesome moms... now that's a fondly irritating reality most of us have borne. As is the statement "Because I said so" that has been part of disciplining by most parents. *Because I Said So* captures the dogged attempts of Diane Keaton who tries to 'direct' daughter Mandy Moore's life and love affairs even when she's clearly redundant. But as Diane piteously asks, "When does a mom know when it's time to stop playing mom?" Never! The film strikes a chord because the story is so familiar. Diane tries her best to sparkle as a mom who sets up her daughter with the ideal match that she finds on the Internet. Only, the daughter has a penchant for falling for all the wrong types, this time for a single dad with a spunky son. So who will it be? Rich guy with family heirlooms or rough-and-tumble guy with an easy attitude? No prizes for guessing. Haven't we seen enough of fairy tales unfold on silver screens?

## ▶ BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: GURINDER CHADHA | CAST: PARMINDER NAGRA, KEIRA KNIGHTLEY, JONATHAN RHYS MEYERS, ANUPAM KHER

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## ▶ BOYZ N THE HOOD

COMEDY | 1991 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: JOHN SINGLETON
CAST: LAURENCE FISHBURNE, CUBA GOODING JR., ICE CUBE, ANGELA BASSETT

It's a tough, battle-strewn turf that lies behind the facade of well-manicured lawns and up-market suburbs of Los Angeles. In this all-black neighbourhood, there's one bitter truth that determines the lives of its inhabitants. That is the unwritten law which states that one out of 21 black Americans will die before he's 25, and he will be killed by his fellow black Americans. Growing up here isn't the easiest of things, where violence is a way of life and the future isn't secure. It takes a disciplined father like Laurence Fishburne to keep his son, Cuba Gooding Jr, focused and away from the line of fire. The rest of the gang falls prey to nihilism and aggression. Inspired by Ice Cube's rap number *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted*, this is a sledgehammer of a film that looks at teen violence unapologetically. The rap artist makes a promising debut in *Boyz N The Hood* as Doughboy, a philosophical black American, who is already a convict at 17. Yet he dreams of a future that would not be scarred by the social landscape.

## ▶ THE BREAKFAST CLUB

DRAMA | 1985 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN HUGHES
CAST:
MOLLY RINGWALD, EMILIO ESTEVEZ, ANTHONY MACHEL HALL, JUDD NELSON

So what are the quintessential teen problems? Alienation, domineering adults, insecurity, generation gap, peer pressure ... recognizable problems from pages of every teen's diary. *The Breakfast Club* takes on all these problems and dissects them in this black comedy that unfolds in a single day. Five students, who have been strangers before, share a common punishment – detention – only to realize that they do share a lot of other things. Behind their diverse facade, the jock, geek, rebel, prom queen and social outcast all have a similar affliction: youth and its turbulence. The Saturday detention becomes a life-changing experience. And they emerge better equipped to handle the befuddling adult world. Riveting stuff.

## ▶ CLUELESS

COMEDY | 1995 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
AMY HECKERLING
CAST:
ALICIA SILVERSTONE, BRITTANY MURPHY, PAUL RUDD, STACEY DASH, JUSTIN WALKER

A look at the life and times of teen queens – pampered young things in Beverly Hills – *Clueless* is a breezy comedy about growing up and finding love and identity amidst the superficiality that surrounds the rich and famous. Cher (Alicia Silverstone), the spoilt, ultra-chic kid of a successful father, threatens to take care of her boyfriends with a gun and shovel if anything goes wrong on the date. Cher believes life is a cakewalk and tells her buddy (Stacey Dash), there's no point learning to park a car since they'll always have a valet. *Clueless* takes a sassy and satirical look at the smart, scheming escapades of a bunch of rich kids who are actually hungry for love and normalcy.

## ▶ CRUEL INTENTIONS

COMEDY | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROGER KUMBLE
CAST:
SARAH MICHELLE GELLER, RYAN PHILLIPE, REESE WITHERSPOON

*Cruel Intentions* is a high school adaptation of the adult sexual drama, *Dangerous Liaisons*. This time, the target of the game is Cecilia (Reese Witherspoon), a high school student, who has pledged to remain a virgin until she meets her dream mate. The bored and cynical campus playboy, Sebastian (Ryan Phillipe), regards this as a challenge and makes a bet with his stepsister (Sarah Michelle Geller). If he breaks Cecilia's pledge, he gets his stepsister; if he doesn't, his stepsister gets his sports car. Indeed, a cruel game, played out with characteristic teen carelessness. Nevertheless, a dangerous edge and unexpected twists and turns make the film thrilling.

## ▶ DAZED AND CONFUSED

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★½

"If I ever say these were the best years of my life, remind me to kill myself," declares one of the characters in *Dazed And*

DIRECTION:
PETER WEIR
CAST:
ROBIN WILLIAMS, ETHAN HAWKE
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

*Confused*, a film that tears the lid off the teenage years and the romanticism associated with them. Viewed as the flip side of *American Graffiti*, this film mirrors the angst of a bunch of teenagers on the last day of high school and the long night that follows it. The narrative follows different characters, showing the sundry concerns of youngsters who are unsure, insecure and almost purposeless. The characters are atypical youngsters, found in any college: the nerd, pot addict, hottie, introvert, bully and the 20-something, trapped in a time machine.

## ▶ DEAD POET'S SOCIETY

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
PETER WEIR
CAST:
ROBIN WILLIAMS, ETHAN HAWKE
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

An English teacher, Robert Keating (Robin Williams), comes to Welton Academy, America's foremost prep school, and unleashes a revolution. Through poetry and philosophy, he teaches freethinking and creativity to students as opposed to conformism and regimentation. The Academy, famous for producing doctors, engineers and bureaucrats, can't handle a bunch of freethinkers, who not only quote Shelley and Thoreau, but also stand on their desks to get a different perspective – a more exalted one – on life. And when one young freethinker turns his back on authority and refuses to kowtow to his father's wishes, it's time for a clampdown. Robert Keating must go, poetry should be declared dead, and convention should rule. So what if the students are back on the desks, standing up in protest against their favourite teacher's dismissal? *Dead Poet's Society* takes a whole new look at education and makes a fervent plea against creating foot soldiers out of students.

## ▶ DECEMBER BOYS

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
ROD HARDY
CAST:
DANIEL RADCLIFFE, LEE CORMIE

Harry Potter comes of age in *December Boys*. It's Daniel Radcliffe's first film after he outgrew the Harry Potter franchise. As the eldest in a quartet of lovable orphans, Radcliffe pitches in a gripping portrayal. He heads the gang of orphans, as it spends an idyllic Christmas vacation with a friendly family that lives on the Australian beach. The four would have to return to the orphanage after the vacation, unless they find a new home. And when they find a young couple next door wanting to adopt the best of them, it's competition time. But Radcliffe thinks parents are no big deal and prefers to spend time with the pretty girl next door, leaving the younger boys to compete for adoption. Soon, the vacation turns out to be a special summer. The boys come of age, family acquires a new meaning and life never remains the same. *December Boys* is about human bonds that sometimes transcend blood relations.

## ▶ DIRTY DANCING

ROMANCE | 1987 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: EMILE ARDOLINO | CAST: JENNIFER GREY, PATRICK SWAYZE

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## ▶ DISTURBIA

THRILLER | 2007 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
DJ CARUSO
CAST:
SHIA LEBEOUF, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS, SARAH ROEMER

Hitchcock revisited, *Disturbia* is a teen flick that brings back memories of *Rear Window*. Though this film is hardly a classic, it keeps you riveted as you join Shia LeBeouf's voyeuristic adventures that find him chasing a killer from his bedroom window. Kewl stuff! Shia loses his dad in a car accident and ends up as a disturbed teen. He punches his teacher in class and ends up under house arrest for three months. He has nothing but a laptop, a TV and video games to keep him company. Though he's got yummy mummy, the *Matrix* girl, Carrie-Anne Moss, playing mom, he doesn't seem to care. Bored, he takes to snooping on his neighbours through a binocular. After lingering on bikinis and porn TV, he ends up panning on a shady neighbour who loves to mow his lawn and snoop around at midnight. Soon, he begins to see body parts too and is called upon to play vigilante. *Disturbia* keeps the popcorn cracking.

## ▶ DONNIE DARKO

DRAMA | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
RICHARD KELLY
CAST:
JAKE GYLLENHAAL, DREW BARRYMORE

A troubled teenager, Donnie Darko's (Jake Gyllenhaal) last year in high school becomes even more eventful when he starts following the bidding of a strange creature: a six-feet-tall rabbit that wears an insect mask. Though completely disassociated from his surrounding, Donnie tries to communicate with his family and girlfriend (Drew Barrymore). But soon Donnie's illusionary world threatens to completely take over his real life and he begins to believe the world will end in 28 days. Can guru Patrick Swayze end his hallucinations – or is it reality? – and bring him back to the real world? A teasing metaphor on the turbulence of teen years, *Donnie Darko* is not your run-of-the-mill fare.

## ▶ ELECTION

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ALEXANDER PAYNE
CAST:
MATTHEW BRODERICK, REESE WITHERSPOON, CHRIS KLEIN

Elections are dirty business and so are college elections. And when a teacher (Matthew Broderick) gets involved, even selecting a college president can become complicated and messy. Tracy (Reese Witherspoon), the college super-achiever, would have won unopposed if only Professor Jim McAllister (Matthew Broderick) hadn't stepped in. He has a point to score with the bright and saucy Tracy and sets up his own candidate, Paul, a low IQ football star. Soon, there is a third candidate, Tammy, the firebrand college lesbian who believes college elections are nothing more than political charades. Loyalties get further intertwined when McAllister finds he's sexually attracted to Tracy. *Election* has enough drama, intrigue and fireworks to make it an interesting take on college life.

## ▶ ELEPHANT

CRIME | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
GUS VAN SANT
CAST:
ALEX FROST, ERIC DUELEN

*Elephant*, feted at the Cannes Film Festival, is a no-hold-barred look at campus violence. Ostensibly based on the Columbine High School shootings that left 13 young people dead, the film is a simple documentation of the incident, without offering any explanation or solutions. There is no glorification of violence, as this would subvert the film's intention, which is to depict teens' tryst with aggression as soulless and deadening. The film tracks a day in high school, with students and teachers going about their humdrum routine as the camera follows them. Most of them interact with the killers (Alex Frost and Eric Duelen), without even realizing what lies ahead. The delinquents appear like normal kids, with a predilection for Hitler and violent video games. Reason enough to suspect them? Not really. Therein lies the importance of *Elephant* that portrays delinquents as seemingly normal people who can suddenly trigger off catastrophic events.

## ▶ ENCHANTED

ROMANCE | 2007 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
KEVIN LIMA
CAST:
AMY ADAMS, PATRICK DEMPSEY, SUSAN SARANDON

*Enchanted* is crazy, zany and absolutely delightful. With its brilliant re-writing of the quintessential fairy tale, it is sure to light up your evening. Part feature and part animation, *Enchanted* airlifts Snow White aka Giselle (Amy Adams), Prince Charming aka Edward (James Marsden), and the wicked Stepmom aka Queen Narissa (Susan Sarandon), armed with her poisoned apple, straight onto Times Square. But the film wouldn't be enchanting if there wasn't a twist in the tale. When the dreamy-eyed animated character, Giselle, meets her Prince Charming and is all set to marry him, she is pushed into a deep well by her prospective mom-in-law, only to emerge out of a manhole in Times Square, as a human. She roams the streets of

New York, waiting for her prince to rescue her, and ends up with a dreamy divorce lawyer (Patrick Dempsey) who is divorced and has a little daughter. No prize for guessing where the new love story begins. But before Giselle can find her true love, she must consume the poisoned apple, talk to her chipmunk friend, and battle the feisty, firebrand and evil Queen, who follows her to NYC. Have a ball, literally.

## ▶ FAME

DRAMA | 1980 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ALAN PARKER
CAST:
EDDIE BARTH, IRENE CARA
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS.

*Fame* is for all those youngsters dreaming of chartering a course in the glamour industry. The film uses song and dance to tell them that the road ahead isn't exactly a roller-coaster ride, promising fame and fortune. A bunch of hopefuls enter a New York College of Performing Arts and begin an arduous journey for the grind ahead. *Fame* is a sensitive insight into pressures that talented teenagers must face to fulfill adult expectations.

## ▶ THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS

ACTION | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: ROB COHEN | CAST: PAUL WALKER, VIN DIESEL

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## ▶ FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH

COMEDY | 1982 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
AMY HECKERLING
CAST:
SEAN PENN, JENNIFER JASON LEIGH

Though set in the 1980s, *Fast Times At Ridgemont High* is a microcosm of campus life. The angst, concerns and attitudes of Sean Penn and Jennifer Jason Leigh are recognizable even today. Penn, an archetypal rebel, ends up confronting authority and has a pathological aversion towards jobs, responsibility and adulthood. "Why would I need a job?" he asks, "All I need are some tasty waves and a cool buzz." Jennifer is the pubescent teen virgin who has just one pressing concern: she wants to lose her virginity as fast as she can, even if it means a roll in the hay with the wrong guy. Maybe, the second time will be better, she tells herself, only to realize that sex without love is meaningless. Featuring teen sex, pregnancy, abortions, drugs, lack of purpose and low motivation, it is an exploration of the teenage mindset.

## ▶ FERRIS BEULLER'S DAY OFF

COMEDY | 1986 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN HUGHES
CAST:
MATTHEW BRODERICK, MIA SARA, ALAN RUCK

What's college without bunking, and what's teen time without a bit of questioning? Ferris Beuller, a bright high school student, is determined to take a day off and go downtown with his girlfriend Sloane (Mia Sara) and his best buddy, Cameron (Alan Ruck). He feigns illness, convinces his friend to bring his dad's precious Ferrari, and drives off into Chicago. Thus, a trip that

begins as a touristy affair ends up as oodles of *gyan* on identity, self-respect and the yawning generation gap. *Ferris Beuller's Day Off* is a breezy comedy that talks about serious stuff.

## ▶ THE FORBIDDEN KINGDOM

ACTION | 2008 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROB MINKOFF
CAST:
JACKIE CHAN, JET LI, MICHAEL ANGARANO

*The Forbidden Kingdom* creates moments of high action and drama when champions of chopsocky, Jackie Chan and Jet Li, clash in this quaint Oriental tale. The film takes you back to ancient China, when warriors ruled, monks fought and the Monkey King metamorphosed into stone. And to ensure you don't lose yourself in this high testosterone time machine, there's our teen hero, an American kid, who spends his time watching old Kung Fu videos from the local pawnshop. The drama is relentless, from the time the kid enters the pawnshop to discover the antique mast and listens to the mumbo-jumbo of the old Chinese shopkeeper. It's the mast that catapults him back in time, since it has to be returned to its rightful owner, the Monkey King. And the two people who can help him reach his destination – an inhospitable place at a mountaintop – are a drunken beggar (Jackie Chan) and a silent monk (Jet Li). Zany, funny and racy, *The Forbidden Kingdom* has the distinct flavour of Jackie Chan's films plus the action of Jet Li's thrillers.

## ▶ FREAKY FRIDAY

COMEDY | 2003 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
MARK WATERS
CAST:
JAMIE LEE CURTIS, LINDSAY LOHAN

In *Freaky Friday*, through a stroke of fortune (actually, a fortune cookie), a mother (Jamie Lee Curtis) and her daughter (Lindsay Lohan) switch bodies for a day. The 40-ish psychotherapist Mom is transformed into the body of her daughter. The belly button pierced 15-year-old Annabelle, a rock guitarist, must now inhabit the buttoned-up body of her mother. All this on the day her mom is remarrying! Now, Annabelle doesn't dislike her mom's boyfriend but he's not her dad and she resents that her mom's moved on after her father's death. The mother, on her part, thinks her daughter's music isn't that great. Obviously, there's need to reconnect and re-bond. Loads of funny moments – and some poignant ones too – as Jamie Lee Curtis tries hard to play vampish and rebellious, even as Annabelle gets a glimpse of her mother's mind. The fact that the wedding rehearsal dinner is in a few hours and the wedding the next day adds to the confusion!

## ▶ GREASE

MUSICAL | 1978 | ★★★½

It's the glorious 1970s at Rydell High Senior Class and life's a roller-coaster ride for students Danny (John Travolta) and Sandy (Olivia Newton-John). It's the time to discover love and prove

**DIRECTION:** RANDAL KLEISER
**CAST:** JOHN TRAVOLTA, OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN

yourself a winner before your respective gangs, the leather-clad T-Birds and the uppity Pink Ladies. Not forgetting the college musical, which provides the perfect setting for these trendy teens to pirouette and preen. Unforgettable songs – *Greased Lightnin', Hopelessly Devoted to You, You're the One I Want* – Travolta's high-decibel dances and a plot that mirrors the agony and ecstasy of college life, *Grease* is riveting retro fare that remains evergreen.

## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

DRAMA | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** MIKE NEWELL | **CAST:** DANIEL RADCLIFFE, EMMA WATSON, RUPERT GRINT, RALPH FIENNES

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## ▶ I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER

THRILLER | 1997 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:** JIM GILLESPIE
**CAST:** JENNIFER LOVE HEWITT, SARAH MICHELLE GELLER, RYAN PHILLIPPE

Four teens, just out of high school, have a lot to celebrate. First, they must toast the end of their school days. Then, they must celebrate July 4 with a prolonged late night party. But driving back on the highway, they have an accident and supposedly kill a man. Completely rattled, they dump the man in the sea and simply drive on, hoping to put the nightmare behind them. But hey, corpses always have a way of resurfacing in slasher movies, even if it takes a year for it to rise from its watery grave, don a fisherman's garb, and return for vengeance with an unforgiving hook. Bodies begin to pile up, friends begin to disappear and it's a race against time for Julie (Jennifer Love Hewitt), Helen (Sarah Michelle Geller), Barry (Ryan Phillippe) and Ray (Freddie Prinze Jr). Thrills and chills keep up the momentum.

## ▶ JUNO

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** JASON REITMAN | **CAST:** ELLEN PAGE, MICHAEL CERA, JENNIFER GARNER

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## ▶ JUST ONE OF THE GUYS

COMEDY | 1985 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
LISA GOTTLIEB
CAST:
JOYCE HYSER, BILLY JAYNE, CLAYTON ROHNER

Terry (Joyce Hyser), a smart high school student, has her future neatly chalked out. She wants to be a journalist, any which way. Her dream seems to be within reach when her school holds a competition for aspiring journalists. Terry sends in her article that would win her an internship in a major newspaper, but her article is rejected. Gender discrimination, cries our young feminist, and devices a novel plan to counter this bias. She cuts her hair and joins a boys' high school, determined to win the contest as a boy. But how long can she hold her secret, especially when there's a suitor around? A light-hearted comedy that actually works, *Just One Of The Guys* has a quaint '80s feel to it.

## ▶ THE KARATE KID

ACTION | 1984 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN G. AVILDSEN
CAST:
RALPH MACCHIO, ELIZABETH SHUE, PAT MORITA

Life isn't easy for young Daniel, especially after he moves from New Jersey to California with his mother. Settling down is tricky business, with school bullies making his life miserable. What's the way out for our quintessential underdog? Karate chops and kicks. At least that's what he thinks and tries to convince Mr. Miyagi (Pat Morita), the unfathomable maintenance man, to become his guru. But Mr. Miyagi is no ordinary teacher. For him, karate isn't only a physical form of attack, to be used for trivial pursuits like vengeance. It's an evolved art of living, embodying discipline of the heart and mind. Indeed, difficult lessons to be learnt by the kickboxing karate kid. Apart from great action, *The Karate Kid* is all about growing up and finding the ground beneath one's feet.

## ▶ LEGALLY BLONDE

COMEDY | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROBERT LUKETIC
CAST:
REESE WITHERSPOON, MATTHEW DAVIS, SELMA BLAIR

In *Legally Blonde*, sprightly Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon) has a tough task cut out for her. She has to prove she's not the proverbial dumb blonde and convince her boyfriend that blondes too can be wife material. Having been dumped by her ambitious high school boyfriend who finds a suitable dark-haired girlfriend (Selma Blair) once he enters Harvard Law School, Elle decides to take things in her hand. She follows him to Harvard, impresses the highbrows with her high scores, wins complicated cases in the courtroom and proves one can be legally blonde and also extremely bright. Does she win her boyfriend back? Irrelevant, as Reese Witherspoon is enough to carry the film alone on her ebullient shoulders.

## ▶ MEAN GIRLS

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MARK WATERS
**CAST:**
LINDSAY LOHAN, RACHEL ADAMS, JONATHAN BENNET

Cady Heron (Lindsay Lohan), a high school junior, has been schooled at home in Africa where her parents worked as anthropologists. When her dad returns and enrolls her in an all-American high school, she ends up as the smartest girl in school. But Lindsay's schooling at home did not prepare her for the other stuff that forms the core of American schooling: the out-of-classroom power games that make or break personalities. Lindsay realizes that although she knows answers in her textbook, she's not smart about how cliques work in school and how image matters more than IQ. A survival guide for cosmopolitan teens, *Mean Girls* is smart, funny and appeals to all ages.

## ▶ NEVER BEEN KISSED

ROMANCE | 1999 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
RAJA GOSNELL
**CAST:**
DREW BARRYMORE, MICHAEL VARTAN, DAVID ARQUETTE

For some, high school's a dream from the past: for others, it's a nightmare to be forgotten. *Never Been Kissed* is for the disgruntled who'd like to get a second chance like Josie Geller (Drew Barrymore) to return to school and set things right. At school, she was known as Josie Grossie, a bespectacled girl, with braces, pimples, hair in her eyes and ugly duckling written all over her. But hey, ugly ducklings do turn into swans, don't they? So does our Josie, now a sub-editor. She's sent to write a series on the highs and lows of high school. She not only rewrites her disastrous prom night, but also redresses lapses in her love life and might be finally kissed. Not by a gawky teenager, but by the English teacher (Michael Vartan) who has a crush on her. Breezy Barrymore adds chutzpah to a banal script.

## ▶ PRETTY IN PINK

COMEDY | 1986 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
HOWARD DEUTCH
**CAST:**
MOLLY RINGWALD, HARRY DEAN STANTON, JOHN CRYER, ANDREW MCCARTHY

*Pretty In Pink* is a high school romance that transcends all clichés despite being the typical rich boy-poor girl story. Molly Ringwald, a pretty girl, belongs to the lower end of the social divide. And as if having to work for a living isn't limiting enough, she also has a crush on the rich hunk (Andrew McCarthy) in class. She doesn't realize that her socially inept best buddy is the boy in her life, especially when her dream date invites her for a date, much to the discomfiture of his snobbish friends. Is the class system entrenched in college too? Find out in this light-hearted comedy, which has some fine performances.

## ▶ REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

DRAMA | 1955 | ★★★★

James Dean acquired a cult status with *Rebel Without A Cause* which was released a month after his untimely death in a car

**DIRECTION:**
NICHOLAS RAY
**CAST:**
JAMES DEAN, NATALIE WOOD

accident. To date, his characterization of the dysfunctional college boy, Jim Stark, seeking a purpose in life, remains the quintessential rebel without a cause. So what exactly is Stark's problem? Is it his family life where peace is permanently shattered by a skewed gender equation between his domineering mother and spineless father? Is it the aimless college days, where the desperation to do something, anything, is so great, it causes him to engage in a do-or-die competition with a friend, causing his death? Or is it the absence of a future in small-town America that doesn't seem to have much to offer? French philosophers had diagnosed Stark's malady as existentialism: the inability of urban man to connect with society. Based on a 1944 novel by Robert Lindner, *Rebel Without A Cause* struck an instant chord by articulating Hamlet's dilemma – to be or not to be. So plausible was the role that Jim Stark has seen several avatars in cinema.

## ▶ RISKY BUSINESS

COMEDY | 1983 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PAUL BRICKMAN
**CAST:**
TOM CRUISE, REBECCA DE MORNEY

Watch Tom Cruise as a teenager in *Risky Business*, only to realize that he always had the makings of a fine actor. Watch also what lies behind the glittering facade of a happy up-market family. Young Joel is left alone when his parents go off on a vacation during the weekend. He can hardly handle the newfound independence. The sedate home is virtually turned into a brothel when a hooker with a heart-of-gold (Rebecca De Morney) moves in for some naughty business. Dad's Porsche lands up at the bottom of a lake and Joel ends up failing in two of his exams. Nahl Not the stuff of nice-boy-stories. But for the viewer, it's a coming-of-age story that's spicy and full of fun.

## ▶ SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

MUSICAL | 1977 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN BADHAM
**CAST:**
JOHN TRAVOLTA, KAREN LYN GORNEY

Tony Manero, a Brooklyn boy who dreamt of escaping his destiny as a salesman in a paint and hardware store, has gone down in Hollywood history as John Travolta's signature role. He's the boy who hangs posters of Rocky on his walls, tries to turn his back to his troubled family life, slogs through the week to blow up his money at the disco in the local nightclub, Odyssey 2001, with his gang of losers and dreamers, on sizzling Saturday nights. Life promises to change for the better when he meets a Brooklyn girl who's managed to find a foothold in Manhattan: the ultimate Eldorado for Brooklyn kids. He teams up with her and wins a local disco competition, but is this the ticket to freedom or the beginning of a sweet love story? In *Saturday Night Fever*, the songs are still chartbusters and Travolta's dances can even now set the floor on fire. A great entertainer.

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## ▶ SAY ANYTHING

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
CAMERON CROWE
**CAST:**
JOHN CUSACK, IONE SKYE

A college underdog (John Cusack) loves the ambitious Alpha girl (Ione Skye) and summons enough courage to invite her for a post-graduation date. The chemistry between them crackles, though they have little in common. But will the dreadful dad let his super-girl settle for a nobody? Not when she's won a prestigious scholarship to England and the boyfriend has no well defined career plans. He doesn't want to join the Army or be a salesman or have any conventional goals. He just wants to be a kick-boxer and spend time with his girl. She also wants to lighten up and have a bit of fun. A warm and sensitive teen romance, *Say Anything* highlights the ups and downs of love.

## ▶ SCREAM

HORROR | 1996 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
WES CRAVEN
**CAST:**
DAVID ARQUETTE, NEVE CAMPBELL, COURTENEY COX, SKEET ULRICH

*Scream* opens with the gruesome murder of Drew Barrymore by a psychopath who wants to see what her insides look like. The stalker then turns his attention to another teenager, Neve Campbell. The young girl already has a troubled past – her mother was murdered a year ago – and can hardly handle the trauma of being pursued by a man who wears the mask of the Grim Reaper and threatens to do his work as well. Add to this a pesky reporter (Courteney Cox) in search of a juicy story, and you have the perfect recipe for chills and thrills that disrupt the life of a bunch of teenagers.

## ▶ SIXTEEN CANDLES

COMEDY | 1984 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN HUGHES
**CAST:**
MOLLY RINGWALD, JUSTIN HENRY

*Sixteen Candles* is for all those teen hopefuls who firmly believe that their 16th birthday will be that magical event that will utterly transform their drab lives. In reality, adulthood isn't a fairy tale that happens in a day. It's a day that might even be forgotten, as in the case of Molly Ringwald whose 16th birthday was forgotten by her family since they were preoccupied with preparations for her elder sister's wedding. But that is not the end of Molly's problems since there's a messy love triangle too. Though Molly loves the campus hunk, he doesn't care about her, just as she ignores the ardent geek who follows her. Popcorn fare.

## ▶ STAND BY ME

DRAMA | 1986 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROB REINER
**CAST:**
WILL WHEATON, RIVER PHOENIX, KIEFER SUTHERLAND

Mourning the death of his friend (River Phoenix), a successful writer (Will Wheaton) goes down memory lane and recaptures the coming-of-age thrills of a long-forgotten summer, when he set out on an adventure with his three boyhood friends. Growing up amidst parental neglect and abuse, they find relief in each other's company, even as they stumble upon a dead body in the midst of the woods. Between childish pranks and bullying that are part of growing up, they forge a friendship that helps them through their tough adult years. Based on Stephen King's short story, *Stand By Me* is a winsome account of growing up and boyhood bonding.

## ▶ SUPERBAD

COMEDY | 2007 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GREG MOTTOLA
**CAST:**
JONAH HILL, MICHAEL CERA

Though hailed in the US as the New Age *American Pie*, we'd rather not get so ecstatic about it. For, though *Superbad* is a funny, randy, teen rap on that crucial first sexual encounter, the humour is too loud and the editing too lousy. Nevertheless, it is rib-tickling to watch two high school boys desperately trying to lose their virginity on the last school party. Will this be the coming-of-age night for the bunch of drunken losers ('coz no one will choose them sober)? Or will this end up as a gawky, fumbling experience? Surprisingly, the best part of *Superbad* isn't about the sex bits, though they are funny and unabashedly crude. Instead, it's the heart-touching male bonding bits that make for better viewing. For the boys find leaving each other more painful – they are going to separate colleges soon – than being without girlfriends. And that's something that almost everyone has gone through.

## ▶ TO SIR WITH LOVE

DRAMA | 1967 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JAMES CLAVELL
**CAST:**
SIDNEY POITIER, CHRISTIAN ROBERTS, SUZY KENDALL

Considered by many as the last word on the tempestuous student-teacher relationship, *To Sir With Love* has become almost mandatory viewing. Mark Thackeray (Sidney Poitier), an engineer from British Guyana, ends up as a teacher in an impoverished East London school when he fails to find a proper job. Soon, he realizes this was the vocation he was looking for. He encounters a class of wild and rebellious 16-year-olds who barely know how to read and write. Also, the students have a mindset riddled with race prejudices, anarchy and self-destruction. Thackeray realizes that the lessons he needs to impart to them cannot be found in books. With his unconventional method of teaching, he not only wins their love and respect, but also prepares them for survival in the harsh world of adults that lies ahead.

## ▶ THE TRANSFORMERS

SCI-FI | 2007 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MICHAEL BAY | CAST: SHIA LABEOUF, MEGAN FOX

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## ▶ WEST SIDE STORY

ROMANCE | 1961 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ROBERT WISE, JEROME ROBBINS | CAST: NATALIE WOOD, RICHARD BEYMER

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## ▶ WHAT A GIRL WANTS

DRAMA | 2003 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
DENNIE GORDON
CAST:
COLIN FIRTH, AMANDA BYNES, KELLY PRESCOTT

Watch Colin Firth play an all-English Daddy to a 17-year-old American in *What A Girl Wants*. He does the bohemian-trapped-in-bourgeois slacks act with exquisite skill. Here, he's Brit royalty that marries an American musician in Morocco and returns to the Manor. But he loses her on the altar of family honour: his cronies have no respect for commoners, you see. Even though she's pregnant with his child. Seventeen years later, when Lord Henry Dashwood (Colin Firth) is all set to become Prime Minister, with a scheming fiancée and a snooty stepdaughter, his long-lost daughter, Daphne Reynolds (Amanda Bynes), returns. Having witnessed umpteen father-daughter dances at weddings where she doubles up as waitress, she now wants her own tango with Daddy. But before that, she's got to clear the dance floor of all extra baggage: hollow customs, fake family pride, empty royalty, stiff upper-lip decorum and scheming hangers-on. And in between she's got to find her own Moroccan flame too – a struggling musician with irresistible bohemian charm. Light-hearted and breezy, *What A Girl Wants* is one more modern Cinderella story.

# 50 BEST ADULT FILMS

## ▶ 10

COMEDY | 1979 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** BLAKE EDWARDS
**CAST:** DUDLEY MOORE, JULIE ANDREWS, BO DEREK

Can a short, middle-aged man get the woman of his sexual fantasies? He can, but only in films. A charming comedy, *10* is all about a man's overpowering desire for an inaccessible woman that completely changes his life. George (Dudley Moore), a successful composer, seems to have everything a man desires, including a loving mistress, Samantha Taylor (Julie Andrews). But one day, while driving down Santa Monica Boulevard, he sees Jenn (Bo Derek), a woman who scores 11 on a scale of one to ten. After that, there is no peace, no sanity left for our testosterone-charged hero who chases her down to Mexico, where she spends time gambolling on a beach with her husband. A bikini-clad Bo Derek, jogging on a beach, is still the stuff girlie posters are made of.

## ▶ AMERICAN PIE

COMEDY | 1999 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** PAUL WEITZ | **CAST:** JASON BIGGS, CHRIS KLEIN, TARA REID, SHANNON ELIZABETH, EUGENE LEVY, MENA SUVARI

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## ▶ BASIC INSTINCT

THRILLER | 1992 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** PAUL VERHOEVEN | **CAST:** MICHAEL DOUGLAS, SHARON STONE

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## ▶ BITTER MOON

DRAMA | 1992 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** ROMAN POLANSKI
**CAST:** HUGH GRANT, KRISTIN SCOTT-THOMAS, PETER COYOTE, EMANUELLE SEIGNER

*Bitter Moon* is an erotic thriller about a mysterious couple on a cruise to Istanbul. Oscar (Peter Coyote) is a cripple with a beautiful and sensuous wife, Mimi (Emanuelle Seigner). He calls her his sorceress in white sneakers. But nothing seems right between them, as Nigel (Hugh Grant), a co-passenger, soon learns. Oscar relates his story — in steamy flashbacks — to a reluctant Nigel who has his crumbling marriage to care about.

Nigel is irresistibly drawn towards the enigmatic woman, even as his wife (Kristin Scott-Thomas) is drifting away from him. Twists in the tale, kinky sex, sadist lovers, there's enough drama to keep the viewer's attention riveted.

## ▶ BODY HEAT

DRAMA | 1981 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
LAWRENCE KASDAN
**CAST:**
WILLIAM HURT, KATHLEEN TURNER, RICHARD CRENNA

So what's hotter: the Florida heat wave or the lusty encounters between Matty Walker (Kathleen Turner), a bored and wealthy housewife, and Ned Racine (William Hurt), a not-so-smart lawyer, whose bedroom skills outsmart his courtroom skills? In this, her debut role, Kathleen Turner excels as a smart, confident, overtly sensual woman who can make a man commit murder for her, merely by her sensuality. For her, Ned seems to be the perfect man. First, because he isn't too smart — she doesn't like smart men. And second, because he just can't seem to resist her physical charm. It's this potent mixture of sex and evil that makes *Body Heat* a mercury-rising affair.

## ▶ BOOGIE NIGHTS

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON
**CAST:**
MARK WAHLBERG, BURT REYNOLDS, JULIANNE MOORE, HEATHER GRAHAM

Though Jack Horner (Burt Reynolds) makes porn movies, he is an idealistic filmmaker. He believes that the billion dollar porn industry that throbs off mainstream Hollywood can blend art with sex and produce artistic porn films. He gets his chance when he discovers Eddie Adams (Mark Wahlberg), a young waiter in a nightclub, and transforms him into Dirk Diggler, the hottest stud of the new wave porn industry. Diggler isn't the only one who shares his vision. There's Julianne Moore, a top-billed female star; Heather Graham, an airhead aspiring starlet who calls herself Roller Girl; Don Cheadle, a veteran who dreams of a normal family life; and William H. Macy, a production guy who hates what he's doing. It's a menagerie of aggrieved outsiders who desperately want to belong but find themselves marginalized by the changing dynamics of the market. A brilliant mood piece, *Boogie Nights* captures the 1980s with its drugs and disco culture and has a riveting cast.

## ▶ BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN

DRAMA | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ANG LEE
**CAST:**
HEATH LEDGER, JAKE GYLLENHAAL, ANNE HATHAWAY

In *Brokeback Mountain*, the plot revolves around the illicit affair between two cowboys who have a clandestine relationship because strict social norms wouldn't allow them to come out of the closet. Aesthetically, *Brokeback Mountain* captures the visual splendour of Wyoming — quintessential cowboy country — with great artistry. Even the morals and mores of the 1960s and 1970s are dealt with elegiac sensitivity. While tending sheep on a cold night on the summit of Brokeback Mountain, Ennis del

AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING ONE FOR BEST DIRECTOR (ANG LEE).

Mar (Heath Ledger) and Jack Twister (Jake Gyllenhaal) discover a forbidden passion for each other. Soon, the passion grows into forbidden love, forcing the two to take off into the mountains. All they want to do is to live together on a ranch, but stringent social mores and family compulsions end the affair on a tragic note. Watch *Brokeback Mountain* for its visual opulence and unconventional storyline.

## ▶ CHOCOLAT

DRAMA | 2000 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: LASSE HALLSTROM | CAST: JULIETTE BINOCHE, JOHNNY DEPP, ALFRED MOLINA

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## ▶ COMING HOME

DRAMA | 1978 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
HAL ASHBY
CAST:
JANE FONDA, JOHN VOIGHT, BRUCE DERN
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (JOHN VOIGHT) AND BEST ACTRESS (JANE FONDA).

Sally (Jane Fonda) believes that men have opinions: women just believe in them. She's ideal wife material, being unquestioning and hopelessly devoted to her Marine husband Bob (Bruce Dern). Bob leaves for Vietnam because he believes in the cause. Sally believes in it too. But soon she finds that she has opinions that differ from her husband, and a life that allows her to carve a separate identity for herself. She meets an angry, cynical Luke (John Voight) who has just returned from Vietnam as a paraplegic. Soon, their friendship grows into intimacy, even as they discover their own selves while discovering each other. It's an intensely moving, mature love story, handled with great sensitivity.

## ▶ CRUEL INTENTIONS

COMEDY | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: ROGER KUMBLE | CAST: SARAH MICHELLE GELLER, RYAN PHILLIPE, REESE WITHERSPOON

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## ▶ DANGEROUS LIAISONS

DRAMA | 1988 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STEPHEN FREARS
CAST:
GLENN CLOSE, JOHN MALKOVICH, MICHELLE PFEIFFER, KEANU REEVES, UMA THURMAN
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS.

It's a gilt-edged trip into the devilish world of love and desire. Yes, *Dangerous Liaisons* travels into a dark, devious territory, where the emotion may be love, but the outcome is deep anguish. Set against the decadence of 18th century France, the film focuses on a string of tragic emotional entanglements as two bored aristocrats play a game of revenge. The Machiavellian Marquise Isabelle de Merteuil (Glenn Close) uses her ex-lover, Vicomte Sébastien de Valmont (John Malkovich), to settle scores with her new boyfriend who has left her to marry the virginal Cécile de Volanges (Uma Thurman). She wants Malkovich to de-flower the virgin before she weds, but her plans go slightly awry when Malkovich falls in love with the

virtuous Madame de Tourvel (Michelle Pfeiffer). She desperately wants to remain faithful to her husband but cannot defend herself against the wicked charm of the sinister aristocrat. Sadly, there is no room for love in this adult interplay of emotions. With jealousy, deceit and heartbreak being the overriding emotions, the wicked game of love is played out to near-perfection against an ornate backdrop.

## ▶ DISCLOSURE

DRAMA | 1994 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: BARRY LEVINSON | CAST: MICHAEL DOUGLAS, DEMI MOORE

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## ▶ DON'T LOOK NOW

DRAMA | 1973 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
NICOLAS ROEG
CAST:
JULIE CHRISTIE, DONALD SUTHERLAND

Devastated by their young daughter's death, John and Laurie Baxter (Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie) opt for a change of scene to forget their painful past. The anguish is all the more pronounced because John, with his gift of precognition, could see the disaster before it happened and yet, failed to prevent it. They move to Venice, where John begins work on a church mural. But death seems to be stalking the couple, especially when a tourist warns them that John's life is in danger. The old English lady claims to have had a psychic communication with their dead daughter who desperately tried to warn her father about his impending doom. The prophecy threatens to come true when the picturesque city is ripped apart by a series of grisly murders. Based on a short story by Daphne De Maurier, *Don't Look Now* is truly unsettling.

## ▶ THE DREAMERS

DRAMA | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BERNADO BERTOLUCCI
CAST:
MICHAEL PITT, EVA GREEN, LOUIS GARELL

Riots of 1968 in Paris form the backdrop to this *ménage a trois* where three young dreamers (read, drifters) while away their time in steamy encounters and heady discussions, until the activist in them awakens. In *The Dreamers*, Matthew (Michael Pitt), an idealistic American in Paris, strikes up a friendship with a brother-sister duo (Eva Green, Louis Garell) he meets at famed Cinematheque Francaise. Soon, academic discussions on cinema lead to a more intimate encounter between the three, with Matthew moving into the house of the unusually close French siblings. But when Paris descends into chaos as the government cracks down on anti-government protestors, it's time for the three to wake up from their dreamy bohemian existence. Suddenly, it's time to look outside from their closed windows into streets below, a world of unrest, injustice and protest. There's incest, nudity, political activism and there's Bernado Bertolucci, the Italian filmmaker who paints on screen.

## ▶ EYES WIDE SHUT

DRAMA | 2000 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: STANLEY KUBRICK
CAST: TOM CRUISE, NICOLE KIDMAN

Bill and Alice (Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman) are happily married, but their marital bliss takes a plunge when a stoned Alice confesses she almost committed adultery. Consumed by jealousy, Bill storms out of his house, nursing his bruised ego, and wanders for two nights through Manhattan's nightlife, testing the grounds for adultery. His journey leads him to an association with a hooker and, finally, to a closed-door orgy, replete with sexual rituals that would have pleased even Marquis de Sade. But there is just a suggestion of sex and erotica throughout *Eyes Wide Shut*, which is essentially a celebration of monogamy.

## ▶ FATAL ATTRACTION

THRILLER | 1987 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ADRIAN LYNE | CAST: MICHAEL DOUGLAS, GLENN CLOSE, ANNE ARCHER
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## ▶ GHOST

ROMANCE | 1990 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: JERRY ZUCKER | CAST: DEMI MOORE, PATRICK SWAYZE, WHOOPI GOLDBERG
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## ▶ THE GRADUATE

DRAMA | 1967 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MIKE NICHOLS | CAST: DUSTIN HOFFMAN, ANNE BANCROFT, KATHERINE ROSS
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## ▶ HEARTBREAKERS

DRAMA | 2001 | ★★★

DIRECTION: DAVID MIRKIN

The plot of *Heartbreakers* revolves around the con act of a mother and daughter — Sigourney Weaver and Jennifer Love-Hewitt — and creates a mix of comedy and drama. Who is the target of this ingenious duo? They are rich and middle-aged

CAST:
SIGOURNEY WEAVER, JENNIFER LOVE-HEWITT, RAY LIOTTA

men whom Max, the mother, woos into matrimony and Page Conners, the daughter, seduces for a bit on the side. End result? The man ends up paying a heavy sum as divorce settlement, while the mother-daughter duo waltz off into the sunset, looking for their next victim. There's just one problem in this perfect crime set-up. They never accounted for love in all this man-woman business. Trouble begins when the daughter falls in love with Jack, a young bartender (Jason Lee), while the mother is already stalking a multimillionaire (Gene Hackman). The dysfunctional duo delights in bits and places.

## ▶ HENRY AND JUNE

DRAMA | 1990 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
PHILIP KAUFMAN
CAST:
FRED WARD, UMA THURMAN, MARIA DE MEDEIROS

In the 1930s, it was still not permissive enough in Paris for a young woman writer to freely write and talk about sex. Against this prudish Parisian backdrop unfolds a steamy affair between young writer Anais Nin (Maria de Medeiros) and Henry Miller (Fred Ward), the American writer who had still to burst on the literary firmament with his famed book, *Tropic of Cancer*. Nin is bored with her banker husband and maintains a secret diary to pen down her erotic fantasies after her dismal coupling with him. But there's also a third player in this intimate circle, June Miller (Uma Thurman), Henry's tantrum-throwing, heady, force-of-nature wife. The trio's sexual escapades in *Henry And June* are actually a search for identity and a form of rebellion against social constrictions and false morality.

## ▶ HOLY SMOKE

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
JANE CAMPION
CAST:
KATE WINSLET, HARVEY KEITEL

Ruth Barron (Kate Winslet), a young Australian woman, comes for a vacation to India and is lured by its spiritual exotica. She decides to stay back and spend the rest of her life under the tutelage of her New Age guru, much to the dismay of her parents who think she has joined some weird cult. They call her back on a false pretext and put her under the guidance of a well-known American de-programmer, PJ Waters (Harvey Keitel), who tries to exorcise her of her newly acquired faith. But religious therapy soon gets transmuted into intimacy as the two spend three days together, indulging in heady sex and heavy debate. Does catharsis lie at the end of the road? Watch out for Kate Winslet playing the game of seduction to perfection. India remains just a colourful backdrop in *Holy Smoke* and merely reiterates the Western stereotype of the mystical East.

## ▶ INDECENT PROPOSAL

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: ADRIAN LYNE | CAST: ROBERT REDFORD, DEMI MOORE, WOODY HARRELSON

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## ▶ IRMA LA DOUCE

COMEDY | 1963 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
BILLY WILDER
**CAST:**
SHIRLEY MACLAINE, JOHN LEMMON
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

Ex-cop Nestor (John Lemmon) falls in love with a beautiful prostitute (Shirley MacLaine) in Paris and tries to keep her for himself by posing as an English Lord who wants to buy up all her time. And all her services too. Now that's not an easy task, especially if you're a stiff-collar gendarme who's been bounced off the force. A classic musical based on a Broadway play, *Irma La Douce* boasts of a memorable performance by MacLaine as Irma the Sweet.

## ▶ LAST TANGO IN PARIS

DRAMA | 1972 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
BERNADO BERTOLUCCI
**CAST:**
MARLON BRANDO, MARIA SCHNEIDER

*Last Tango in Paris* may boast of some of the most erotic scenes on celluloid but there's more to it than steamy encounters between an ageing Marlon Brando and a young Maria Schneider, as they try and sculpt a relationship that is based on sex alone. Brando's Paul is overpowered by grief that leads him towards self-destruction. His wife has committed suicide, and he doesn't know why. Schneider's Jeanne is a young woman, bored with her colourless betrothed and nervous with the idea of marriage. The two meet accidentally in a deserted apartment in Paris and end up fighting their fears and overpowering despair with unbridled sex, tinged with violence. And when the attraction threatens to blow over beyond the physical realm, there is only one way this unnatural coupling can head: doom! Marlon Brando pitches in a memorable performance as the man torn between soul-destroying grief and steamy eroticism.

## ▶ LOLITA

DRAMA | 1962 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
STANLEY KUBRICK
**CAST:**
JAMES MASON, SUE LYON, SHELLEY WINTERS

When Stanley Kubrick cinematically adapted Vladimir Nabokov's famous book, *Lolita*, he incurred the wrath of many — the Roman Catholic Legion of Decency and the industry's self-censorship Production Code —though the film treats erotica as high art. It was the plot itself — the obsession of a middle-aged professor for a 14-year-old girl — that seemed to have challenged the liberal quotient of a conservative society. Even today, *Lolita* continues to challenge the public taste. But the film boasts of a scintillating portrayal by Sue Lyon as the precocious, sexy and emotionally immature girl who drives Professor Humbert (James Mason) crazy with lust.

## ▶ MIGHTY APHRODITE

DRAMA | 1995 | ★★★½

Lenny and Amanda (Woody Allen and Helena Bonham Carter) adopt a child because Amanda feels it would save their crumbling marriage. As the child grows, so does Lenny's

DIRECTION:
WOODY ALLEN
CAST:
WOODY ALLEN, HELENA BONHAM CARTER, MIRA SORVINO
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (MIRA SORVINO).

curiosity about the real mother, especially since he finds the boy to be unusually bright. He ransacks the office files at the adoption agency and tracks her down. Surprisingly for him, she is the archetypal dumb blond, a beautiful porn film actress (Mira Sorvino) who doesn't mind doing a bit on the side, if it brings her extra bucks. She has long legs, a rasping voice, a low IQ and a tyrannical pimp who hounds her. It's left to Lenny to bring some order — and warmth — into her loveless life. He even tries to set her up with a nice guy, a boxer-turned-potato farmer (Michael Rapaport). But the star of the show is Mira Sorvino who effectively portrays the inherent innocence of a hooker who hasn't been affected by the sleaze around her.

## ▶ MONSTER'S BALL

DRAMA | 2001 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
MARC FOSTER
CAST:
BILLY BOB THORNTON, HALLE BERRY, HEATH LEDGER
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (HALLE BERRY).

Can sex be therapeutic? Can a momentary physical high, even for a short while, ameliorate grief, pain and bitterness? Can two individuals who ought to hate each other, find something like love? That's the teasing premise behind *Monster's Ball*. The film is an interesting study of human behaviour under duress. Hank Grotowski (Billy Bob Thornton) is a Corrections Officer who oversees the execution of a death-row inmate convicted of killing a cop. On the personal front, he has a miserable family life and inherits the prejudices of his racist father (Peter Boyle). A coincidence brings him face to face with the dead criminal's wife, Leticia Musgrove (Halle Berry), who has her own tale of woe. The two try to seek solace and forget their troubles by having a steamy sexual encounter. And somewhere down the line, they clear the cobwebs in their lives and look towards a better future. With their scintillating performances, Thornton and Berry bring alive on screen two unusual characters.

## ▶ MULHOLLAND DRIVE

THRILLER | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
DAVID LYNCH
CAST:
NAOMI WATTS, LAURA HARRING, JUSTIN THEROUX

A wannabe actress, Betty Elms (Naomi Watts), who dreams of a career in Hollywood, steps off a plane from Ontario and meets a distressed girl (Laura Harring) who seems to have lost her memory after a car accident at Mulholland Drive, on the outskirts of Hollywood. It's left to the young starlet to help her find her identity and put together the missing pieces of her life. Especially since she seems to be falling hopelessly in love with her. It is a surreal drive, loaded with sex and violence, through the flip side of Hollywood glamour, where ambition and money underline almost everything. Take special note of Naomi Watts in *Mulholland Drive* as the struggling actress and the film's moody atmosphere.

## ▶ NATURAL BORN KILLERS

ACTION | 1994 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
OLIVER STONE
CAST:
WOODY HARRELSON, JULIETTE LEWIS, TOM SIZEMORE

Supposedly a satire on the media's obsession with violence and the glamorization of violence in American society, *Natural Born Killers* is an unsettling account of a pair of young lovers, Mickey and Mallory (Woody Harrelson, Juliette Lewis), who end up as serial killers to satisfy their passion for gore. They kill almost everyone they meet, taking care to leave at least one witness to their grisly game of death. Chased by a cop (Tom Sizemore) and by the media (Robert Downey Jr.), they acquire instant notoriety — or is it fame? — and become a household name, with their exploits prominently featured in all TV channels and magazines. So for whom is killing a sport: society or the serial killers? asks Oliver Stone in this blood-splattered film. According to some film enthusiasts, *Natural Born Killers* has a body count that adds up to an astonishing 52. It's a bold and daring assault on conventional cinema, where Stone even tries to lionize the killers by showing them as victims of the state's law and order machinery. In jail, the sadistic Jail Warden (Tommy Lee Jones) tortures Mickey, while the in-house expert on mass murderers (Tom Sizemore) sexually exploits Mallory. A brutal world can only produce bitter fruit, concludes Oliver Stone in this zany crime drama.

## ▶ NINE AND 1/2 WEEKS

DRAMA | 1986 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
ADRIAN LYNNE
CAST:
MICKEY ROURKE, KIM BASINGER

They first meet in a Chinese grocery store. Now that's a banal beginning to an explosive affair between an art gallery employee, Elizabeth (Kim Basinger), and a Wall Street broker, John (Mickey Rourke), who experiment with sex. It's a relationship that lasts merely for nine and a half weeks but creates a whole new metaphor for physical intimacy. Mickey Rourke leads Kim through an entire new experience of erotica. In one sequence, he blindfolds her and feeds her an assortment of sweet and sour edibles; in another he makes love to her on the doorway of a downtown area, brimming over with thugs and hoodlums. It's a coupling that is in stark contrast to the tedium of their daily lives. But somewhere down the torrid affair, the woman has to ask herself if she actually enjoys playing some kind

of a sex slave or are there questions of self-respect that need to be addressed, despite the thrill of dangerous intimacy. *Nine And 1/2 Weeks* has great chemistry and gritty drama.

## ▶ ORIGINAL SIN

ROMANCE | 2001 | ★★★

DIRECTION: MICHAEL CRISTOFER
CAST: ANTONIO BANDERAS, ANGELINA JOLIE

Call it Adam and Eve, circa 2001. Based on the novel, *Waltz Into Darkness*, the film traces the unbridled ardour of Luis (Antonio Banderas) for his wife Julia (Angelina Jolie). A passion which refuses to die even when he realises he has been duped, cuckolded and could be killed by the woman who arouses such strong passion. So what if Julia is a cold-blooded murderer with no Christian morals? And so what if Julia is hardly the woman he intended to marry? Julia is the quintessential Eve – reason enough for Luis to put everything on hold, including principles, moral, fortune and family honour. From a respectable businessman to an unscrupulous gambler, the transition of Luis is motivated by his maddening passion for the mysterious woman who enters his life with a false identity and a shadowy lover. But Antonio is hardly to blame. Remember Adam? And if the New Age Eve happens to be the luscious Ms. Jolie, the temptation gets harder to resist. *Original Sin* is unusual, enigmatic and alluring, despite the murky undercurrents of sin, love, lust and passion.

## ▶ OUT OF SIGHT

CRIME | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: STEVEN SODERBERGH | CAST: GEORGE CLOONEY, JENNIFER LOPEZ

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## ▶ THE PIANO

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JANE CAMPION
CAST: HOLLY HUNTER, HARVEY KEITEL, SAM NEILL
AWARDS: THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (HOLLY HUNTER).

*The Piano* is set in the mid-19th century when sexual permissiveness was still a far cry. British emigrant Stewart (Sam Neill) lands in New Zealand with his mute wife, Ada (Holly Hunter), her illegitimate daughter (Anna Paquin) and her piano. He carries with him his baggage of uptight British mores. As Stewart feels the piano is too big for his house, he wants to sell it to Baines (Harvey Keitel), another Englishman. Unlike Stewart, Baines has adopted the Maori tradition and believes in unbridled freedom of expression. He is ready to buy the piano but only if Ada teaches him to play it. An offer Ada can't resist since the piano is her only form of expression. And when Baines wants to strike a deal with her, offering her the piano in return, she can hardly refuse the deal. Not because she needs the piano, but because she can't curb her passion anymore ... Sensuality bursts forth in encounters between Holly Hunter and Harvey Keitel, only because of its muted tones and subtle nuances.

## ▶ THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE

THRILLER | 1981 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: BOB RAFELSON
CAST: JACK NICHOLSON, JESSICA LANGE, JOHN COLICOS

The sheer physicality of their lovemaking, as Jack Nicholson and Jessica Lange come together, animal-like, on the kitchen table, is yet to find a rival in Hollywood cinema. There's no romance in the coupling of this decrepit drifter and the bored housewife. Just pure sex, which soon gets a delicious tingle of crime, as the lovers decide to do away with Lange's alcoholic, ambitious Greek-American husband who uses his sensuous wife as a plebeian cook for his eatery. Based on a novel by James M Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* is a sexier, steamier version of the earlier Hollywood adaptations.

## ▶ PULP FICTION

ACTION | 1994 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: QUENTIN TARANTINO | CAST: JOHN TRAVOLTA, UMA THURMAN, BRUCE WILLIS, SAMUEL L. JACKSON

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## ▶ RISKY BUSINESS

COMEDY | 1983 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: PAUL BRICKMAN | CAST: TOM CRUISE, REBECCA DE MORNEY

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## ▶ SECRETARY

COMEDY | 2002 | ★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SHAINBERG
CAST: JAMES SPADER, MAGGIE GYLLENHAAL

Lee Holloway (Maggie Gyllenhaal) gives a whole new definition to the ubiquitous secretary in *Secretary*. The film is a teasing tale of unconventional sex and strange desires. She's a young girl, prone to self-mutilation, whenever things become unbearable. Just out from a mental institution, she looks for a normal life and seeks employment as a secretary to an uptight lawyer (James Spader). But the two give the submissive secretary-domineering boss relationship a new twist, with the boss spanking the secretary for her spelling errors, and the secretary deliberately making them, so that she's spanked. That's just the surface of this complicated little psychological drama on sado-masochism and its perverse pleasures.

## ▶ SEVEN YEAR ITCH

DRAMA | 1955 | ★★★½

*Seven Year Itch* boasts of one of the most recognizable frames of Hollywood: a delectable, blonde Marilyn Monroe in a white halter, seductively clutching onto her billowing white skirt as she stands atop an air chute on a New York subway. Billy Wilder's romantic comedy about sexual promiscuity in the males lives up to its tantalizing poster. Richard Sherman (Tom Ewell) is the quintessential summer bachelor who has been left alone in his Manhattan apartment when his wife and son go off

DIRECTION:
BILLY WILDER
CAST:
MARILYN MONROE, TOM EWELL

for a summer holiday to the countryside. Sherman suddenly finds himself harbouring sexual fantasies for the Girl (Marilyn Monroe) upstairs, an anonymous blonde, who is willing to sit on the ground and eat chips with married men. But infidelity doesn't come easy to happily married men, even though the film tries its best to blame the seven year itch on biology. The desperately deprived man battles with his natural urges, even as the Girl drives him wild with her sensuality. Monroe plays the dumb blonde to perfection in this breezy comedy about adult misdemeanours.

## ▶ SHOOT 'EM UP

ACTION | 2007 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
MICHAEL DAVIS
CAST:
CLIVE OWEN, MONICA BELLUCCI, PAUL GIAMATTI

This one is *Pulp Fiction* revisited, minus the style. Michael Davis is a self-confessed fan of Quentin Tarantino and John Woo and pays homage to their cinema of the fast cut, the violence play fest and the funky, overdone frames. A drifter with an extensive army background and a fondness for carrots, Mr. Smith (delightfully, deadpan Owen) listlessly sits and eats a carrot at a bus stop when he sees an assassin chasing a pregnant woman. Carrot in hand, he tries to save the woman, delivers her baby on a car's bonnet, and thinks he has shot the killer. But the killer (Paul Giamatti) keeps brushing off bullets and never gives up the chase, while Owen tries to protect the baby and the wet nurse (Monica Bellucci) who is actually a kind-hearted prostitute ... Incidentally, the story is irrelevant. What matters are the action cuts — and there are loads of them — which exhibit some neat wacko gun wizardry, as bullets fly during a love-making scene.

## ▶ SHOWGIRLS

DRAMA | 1995 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
PAUL VERHOEVEN
CAST:
ELIZABETH BERKLEY, KYLE MACLACHLIN, GINA GERSHON

Nomi Malone (Elizabeth Berkley), a dancer, dreams of making it big in the glamour industry in Vegas. She begins as a lap dancer at a strip club but soon realizes that it takes more than mere talent to make dreams come true in a culture where drugs and sex play key roles. She gets a chance to grab the spotlight when a hotel talent director (Kyle Maclachlin) and a sleaze show's bi-sexual star (Gina Gershon) spot her skills (read, physical attributes). Not quite riveting like Paul Verhoeven's earlier film, *Basic Instinct*, but his films always make an interesting watch.

## ▶ SOME LIKE IT HOT

COMEDY | 1959 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: BILLY WILDER | CAST: MARILYN MONROE, TONY CURTIS, JACK LEMMON

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## ▶ SUMMER OF '42

DRAMA | 1971 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROBERT MULLIGAN
CAST:
JENNIFER O'NEILL, GARY GRIMES
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

A warm and sensitive coming-of-age film, *Summer of '42* is set in the sylvan backwaters of an island in New England where a bunch of schoolboys are spending their last boyhood summer together. The prime obsession of these pubescent teens is to satisfy their raging hormones and lose their virginity as soon as they can. While the rest of the gang is content with fumbling around with the beach girls, young Hermie (Gary Grimes) is silently drawn towards a 22-year-old woman (Jennifer O'Neill) who is waiting for her husband to return from the war front. The two forge a bond that defies all conventions and memories of that special summer remain with Hermie forever. It's a tender celebration of the first sexual encounter in a style that's so different from *American Pie* and other coming-of-age films.

## ▶ SWIMMING POOL

DRAMA | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
FRANCOIS OZON
CAST:
CHARLOTTE RAMPLING, LUDIVINE SAGNIER

Crime novelist Sarah Morton (Charlotte Rampling) is suffering from writer's block and publisher's neglect. Her publisher-lover sends her off to his French countryside haven to get her creative juices flowing again. But the backwaters of France bring up a whole new reality that not only rejuvenates the writer but also helps her rediscover herself. And who's her kindred soul? She's the publisher's illegitimate 17-year-old daughter Julie (Ludivine Sagnier) who is an absolute contrast to the uptight English woman. "You only write about dirty things, but never have the courage to do them," she tells Rampling, even as she comes home with a new man each night, smokes reefers and drinks herself wild. Can't blame her. Years of neglect by her father have left her lonely, desolate and a wildcat. With great acting, a lovely backdrop, and an introspective pace, *Swimming Pool* is refreshingly different.

## ▶ THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY

COMEDY | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: BOBBY FARRELLY, PETER FARRELLY | CAST: BEN STILLER, CAMERON DIAZ, MATT DILLON

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## ▶ TRANSAMERICA

DRAMA | 2005 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
DUNCAN TUCKER
CAST:
FELICITY HUFFMAN, KEVIN ZEGERS

A transsexual Bree (Felicity Huffman) takes a Transamerican ride with teenage dropout Toby (Kevin Zegers) who claims to be her son – from an earlier sexual encounter – and the two end up feeling comfortable with each other. If the 'confused' man/woman realises it is motherhood that is her natural state, the teenager who wanted to seek out his father ends up sharing beer with his 'mom' in complete harmony. Gone are his rootless, drug-addicted days when selling his body was the only way he could survive. *Transamerica* is essentially a road film that begins when Felicity Huffman receives a call from a New York juvenile home, informing her about a son she never knew about. Felicity has just a week to settle this unfinished business before she undergoes her sex change operation. But the week turns out to be a lifetime as the mismatched duo move from lies, suspicion and distrust to become a real family.

## ▶ THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING

DRAMA | 1988 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
PHILIP KAUFFMAN
CAST:
DANIEL DAY-LEWIS, JULIETTE BINOCHE

*The Unbearable Lightness Of Being*, based on Milan Kundera's novel, explores love and longing against the political tumult of Prague in 1968. Tomas (Daniel Day-Lewis), a bohemian doctor, believes there is no difference between love and sex. His views change when he meets waif-like Tereza (Juliette Binoche) who doesn't believe in promiscuity. Tomas marries Tereza but the marriage enters stormy waters since the freewheeling Tomas isn't ready yet to abjure promiscuity, especially when he has a mistress (Lena Olin) who shares his views on sex and commitment. The political colours of *The Unbearable Lightness Of Being* change and so do the personal, as love does eventually triumph, but not before taking its toll on the primary characters. It's an erotically charged canvas sprinkled with the colours of love, jealousy and deceit. The film lives up to Kundera's classic.

## ▶ UNFAITHFUL

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ADRIAN LYNE
CAST:
RICHARD GERE, DIANE LANE, OLIVIER MARTINEZ

Edward and Connie Summers (Richard Gere and Diane Lane) could have been the proverbial happily-ever-after couple with their comfortable existence in New York, but for a rainy day in Manhattan that caught the much-married, middle-aged woman on the wrong foot. Rescued from a deluge by Paul (Olivier Martinez), a bookseller, she steps into his haphazard apartment for a bit. Nothing wrong with that, specially since she was determined to rush back to the reassuring family hearth, to her husband and kid, after drying herself. But the bookseller was a dream, the weather inclement and the hormones raging. She finds herself being unfaithful, in the rain-drenched Manhattan afternoon. Her steamy encounters with

Paul continue ... until the cuckolded husband decides to take the matter in his hands. The high points of *Unfaithful* are the passionate encounters between Olivier Martinez and Diane Lane that add a delicious edge to clandestine sex.

## ▶ VICTOR VICTORIA

COMEDY | 1982 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:** BLAKE EDWARDS
**CAST:** JULIE ANDREWS, JAMES GARNER, ROBERT PRESTON
**AWARD:** ONE OSCAR.

Victoria Grant (Julie Andrews) is a starving singer, down to her last penny, and does not know how to get out of the poverty trap. Not till she meets Carroll Todd (Robert Preston), the friendly neighbourhood Mr. Fix-It, who comes up with the most bizarre solutions to common problems. He tells her to pose as a drag singer, since there is a great demand for drag artists. Quite okay, until Marchand (James Garner) gets smitten by her singing and refuses to believe that she's a man dressed as a woman. But hey, she isn't and would actually like to show off her feminine charm if she wasn't threatened by the fear of being poor again. *Victor Victoria* is a breezy adult comedy with a scintillating man-woman act by Julie Andrews.

## ▶ WEDDING CRASHERS

COMEDY | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** DAVID DOBKIN | **CAST:** OWEN WILSON, VINCE VAUGHN, RACHEL MCADAMS
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## ▶ WILD THINGS

THRILLER | 1998 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:** JOHN MCNAUGHTON
**CAST:** MATT DILLON, KEVIN BACON, NEVE CAMPBELL, DENISE RICHARDS

Kelly (Denise Richards) has a crush on her high school counsellor, Sam Lombardo (Matt Dillon), and tries her best to seduce him. She tantalizingly washes his car for him one summer afternoon and ends up crying rape. Soon, another student, Suzie (Neve Campbell), levels the same charge. A sceptical cop (Kevin Bacon) is forced to investigate the truth, even as the counsellor insists he's being framed. So what's the truth? Surely not skin deep, as the drama triggers off into dangerous territory with the trio — the counsellor and the girls — playing a treacherous game of sex and deceit. *Wild Things* is a bit on the wild side, with the girls rustling up some sinful pleasure on the screen.

# 50 BEST INSPIRATIONAL FILMS

## ▶ APOLLO 13

DRAMA | 1995 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
RON HOWARD
**CAST:**
TOM HANKS, KEVIN BACON, BILL PAXTON
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

As Jim Lovell, Tom Hanks is suitably committed, determined, patriotic and perfect hero material in *Apollo 13*. As the malfunctioning Apollo 13 flounders in mid-space and hope of survival dwindles for the trio – Jim Lovell, Fred Haise and Jack Swigert – Hanks displays the grit and foresight of a true leader. A skilled astronaut, a good husband, a perfect father, Hanks infuses life in the prototype of the perfect American. His performance is the highlight of this prolonged rescue mission that remains localized to two basic venues. Either the space craft or the base station at Houston where an army of space scientists spend seven gruelling days to get the astronauts safely back to planet earth. Director Howard succeeds in building an engrossing drama on the importance of courage, endurance and teamwork.

## ▶ THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES

DRAMA | 1946 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
WILLIAM WYLER
**CAST:**
MYRNA ROY, FREDRIC MARCH, DANA ANDREWS, TERESA WRIGHT
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (FREDRIC MARCH) AND BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (HAROLD RUSSELL).

The war is over. The Nazis have been defeated. The Japanese have been bombed. Three war veterans return to their hometown and try and pick up the strings of their lives. Not an easy task, as Al (Fredric March), an infantryman, points out, "Last year, it was kill Japs. This year, it is make money." However, finding suitable jobs isn't the only problem for the three war heroes: Al Stephenson, a happily married family man, Homer Parrish (Harold Russell), a double amputee who has hooks in place of his hands, Fred Derry (Dana Andrews) an Air Force Captain who married a materialistic girl just before he left for the bombings. Re-connecting with their family and coming to terms with a world that has changed in their absence, are the immediate and arduous tasks that they face. *The Best Years Of Our Lives* is a celebration of life, brimming over with optimism, despite dealing with the flip side of war.

## ▶ BILLY ELLIOT

DRAMA | 2000 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEPHEN DALDRY

Billy Elliot (Jamie Bell) nurtures a dream that he can't share with his family. He wants to be a ballet dancer, but his father believes

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that lads play football, boxing, wrestling, not friggin' ballet. He sends Billy to an amateur boxing club but Billy finds himself a total misfit and wanders off to the neighbouring ballet class. Soon, he enrolls himself and quietly pays 50 pence to learn the moves from Mrs. Wilkinson (Julie Walters), hoping to audition for the Royal Ballet Company someday. Set against the miners strike during Margaret Thatcher's England, the poignancy of Billy's dream becomes even more evident because joblessness and poverty have turned the Elliot family into a troubled lot. But in the search for identity, determination and grit go a long way, as Billy finds in this sentimental tale that tugs at the heart. *Billy Elliot* inspires as well as it exhilarates.

## ▶ BRAVEHEART

ACTION | 1995 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: MEL GIBSON | CAST: MEL GIBSON, SOPHIE MARCEU, PATRICK MCGOOHAN

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## ▶ BREAKING AWAY

DRAMA | 1979 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
PETER YATES
CAST:
DENNIS CHRISTOPHER, DENNIS QUAID
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

*Breaking Away* is a coming-of-age film that captures the highs and lows of the restless teenage years. It has four young heroes learning lessons of adulthood, identity and self-respect through a thrilling climax. Set against the sleepy town of Bloomington, the only action here is conflict between local boys and snooty co-eds of Indiana University who derisively hail the locals as 'cutters'. As most townsmen are stonecutters in the local quarry, the derogatory reference stems from that. But young Dave (Dennis Christopher), who dreams of being a cycle champ, and his three buddies are hell-bent on proving their worth. They get their chance to hit back during a nerve-wracking moment of reckoning. *Breaking Away* is a charming film that celebrates decency and human endeavour. Easy to see where Bollywood's gem, *Jo Jeeta Wahi Sikandar*, came from.

## ▶ CHARIOTS OF FIRE

DRAMA | 1981 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
HUGH HUDSON
CAST:
BEN CROSS, IAN CHARLESON
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

Set against the backdrop of the 1924 Olympics, *Chariots Of Fire* celebrates the spirit of two British track athletes – Harold Abrahams (Ben Cross) and Eric Liddell (Ian Charleson) – as they lead their country to victory. While Liddell, a devout Christian, ran for God, Harold, a Jew, gave his best shot to prove his worth. A gritty sporting encounter, the film celebrates the spirit of Olympics: commitment, perseverance, team spirit and an unbridled desire to succeed.

## ▶ THE COLOR PURPLE

DRAMA | 1985 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:** DANNY GLOVER, WHOOPI GOLDBERG, OPRAH WINFREY, AKOSUA BUSIA

Celie (Whoopi Goldberg) is the archetypal woman in distress who has just two options: either she silently acquiesces and accepts abuse from the men in her life (father, husband) or she stands up and fights back. Based on Alice Walker's Pulitzer-winning novel, *The Color Purple*, Steven Spielberg's film showcases both. First, there is the bleak picture of a woman suffering abuse, first from her father, then by her husband (Danny Glover). She thinks she has everything going against her: she's poor, black, a woman, ugly and has no skills. Then, comes the resurrection. The film unfolds through a series of letters that include Celie's journal addressed to God, and letters of her sister Nettie (Akosua Busia) written home. *The Color Purple* is a searing film on female empowerment.

## ▶ THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK

DRAMA | 1959 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** GEORGE STEVENS
**CAST:** MILLIE PERKINS, JOSEPH SCHILDKRAUT, SHELLEY WINTERS
**AWARDS:** THREE OSCARS.

Anne Frank is the most enduring, heart-rending symbol of Nazi oppression during World War II. *The Diary Of Anne Frank* captures the travails of Anne's (Millie Perkins) life in Amsterdam as she hides with her family and four others for two years in a building's pokey annexe, hoping to escape the fury of the Nazis. The film celebrates hope, despite the constant fear of death and betrayal. *The Diary Of Anne Frank* brings out the desperation of the times, with nerve-wracking detail.

## ▶ DRIVING MISS DAISY

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** BRUCE BERESFORD
**CAST:** MORGAN FREEMAN, JESSICA TANDY
**AWARDS:** FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (JESSICA TANDY).

The stubborn and difficult Miss Daisy (Jessica Tandy) has a minor car accident and loses her license. Her son (Dan Ackroyd) hires a driver for her, the gentle, mild-mannered Hoke (Morgan Freeman), who bears his employee's domineering attitude with infinite grace and patience. It's his demeanour that draws the old woman close to him and soon the two develop a friendship that transcends barriers of race and colour. Their relationship is not easily accepted by society because Miss Daisy is Jewish and Hoke is black. *Driving Miss Daisy* is a heartwarming tale about the true nature of friendship.

## ▶ E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

SCI-FI | 1982 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:** STEVEN SPIELBERG | **CAST:** HENRY THOMAS, DREW BARRYMORE, DEE WALLACE

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## ▶ ERIN BROCKOVICH

DRAMA | 2000 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SODERBERGH | CAST: JULIA ROBERTS, ALBERT FINNEY

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## ▶ FAME

DRAMA | 1980 | ★★★½

DIRECTION: ALAN PARKER | CAST: EDDIE BARTH, IRENE CARA

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## ▶ FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

DRAMA | 1971 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
NORMAN JEWISON
CAST:
TOPOL, NORMA CRANE, LEONARD FREY
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS.

A celluloid adaptation of the famous Broadway musical, *Fiddler On The Roof*, based on a series of short stories by Ukrainian writer Sholom Aleichem, is a heartwarming tale of a Jewish family that tries to keep pace with changing times in a Ukrainian village before World War I. Tevye (Topol), an unassuming milkman, who has to find suitable grooms for his five daughters in these tumultuous times, likens his life to a fiddler who must produce a symphony while being precariously perched on a roof. Swept by the winds of change, his daughters are not ready to accept tradition as sacrosanct. The traditionalist father must adapt to the rapid churning of history. Politically too, it is a season of unrest: the Jews are being driven out of their homes and anti-Tsarist protests are coming to a boil. How then does a simple man hold onto things dear to him? Great performances, memorable songs, a universal theme, this musical never ages.

## ▶ FIELD OF DREAMS

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
PHIL ALDEN ROBINSON
CAST:
KEVIN COSTNER, AMY MADIGAN, RAY LIOTTA, JAMES EARL JONES

The sky is the limit. That's what Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner), an Iowa farmer, and his wife (Amy Madigan), find out in this lyrical ode to the power of fantasy. One day, standing on his cornfields, he hears a voice that tells him "build it and he will come". Instead of dismissing it as corny stuff, our believer begins to build a baseball diamond – the vision he saw along with the celestial voice – in the middle of his fields. His hope?

The second coming of Shoeless Joe (Ray Liotta), a legendary baseball player, who was a member of the infamous Black Sox team, to hit a few hard strokes and create baseball magic. Are his hopes fulfilled? No prizes for guessing.

## ▶ FORREST GUMP

DRAMA | 1994 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ROBERT ZEMECKIS | CAST: TOM HANKS, ROBIN WRIGHT PENN, SALLY FIELDS

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## ▶ GANDHI

DRAMA | 1982 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH | CAST: BEN KINGSLEY, CANDICE BERGEN, ROHINI HATTANGADY

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## ▶ GLORY

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
EDWARD ZWICK
CAST:
MATTHEW BRODERICK, DENZEL WASHINGTON
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (DENZEL WASHINGTON).

Colonel Robert Gould Shaw (Matthew Broderick) has a difficult task at hand. He is asked to lead the controversial Massachusetts 54th into battlefield during the American Civil War. This was the trial battalion set up by the US government, comprising African-American soldiers, most of them slaves, to see whether they could fight as patriotically as white soldiers. Colonel Shaw's troop has many angry, resentful soldiers, including Private Trip (Denzel Washington), who must first fight racial prejudices within the US Army before they can prove their credentials. *Glory* dramatically highlights the role of Blacks in the Civil War, most of which is wrongly dismissed as being marginal.

## ▶ GOOD WILL HUNTING

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
GUS VAN SANT
CAST:
MATT DAMON, ROBIN WILLIAMS, BEN AFFLECK, MINNIE DRIVER
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (ROBIN WILLIAMS).

Sean Maguire (Robin Williams), a world-weary psychologist, bails out young Will Hunting (Matt Damon) from the dregs of society and helps him develop his skills. His genius that had been suppressed by years of abuse and oppression is finally recognized. Will is the archetypal angry young man, a janitor at MIT, who solves complicated theorems on blackboard when no one is looking. When his talent is discovered, it is almost too late, for our mathematical genius is in jail for assaulting a policeman. After his release, and some aborted therapy sessions, he ends up under the benign tutelage of Prof. Sean Maguire and discovers friendship, love and a normal life. *Good Will Hunting* is an uplifting tale of acceptance and growth, where the focus is on identity, self-esteem and a whole lot of good will that forms the bulwark of civilized society.

## ▶ THE GRAPES OF WRATH

DRAMA | 1940 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: JOHN FORD | CAST: HENRY FONDA, JANE DARWELL

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## ▶ THE GREEN MILE

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
FRANK DARABONT
CAST:
TOM HANKS, DAVID MORSE, MICHAEL CLARKE DUNCAN

*The Green Mile* is an uplifting tale of redemption in dismal circumstances. Set against the despair-filled interiors of a death row ward in a Louisiana penitentiary – they call it the Green Mile because it has green floors – during the Great Depression, the film focuses on the humane bond between Paul Edgecombe (Tom Hanks), a death row guard, and new inmate John Coffey (Michael Clarke Duncan), a black man convicted of murdering two white girls. Paul finds it hard to believe that this gentle giant could be guilty of such a heinous crime, especially when he stumbles on a secret. The dim-witted prisoner, who is afraid of the dark, is a faith healer and could cure the terminally ill wife of one of the guards if they managed to smuggle him out. Based on a Stephen King novel, *The Green Mile* celebrates a friendship that transcends all barriers, even death.

## ▶ HIGH NOON

WESTERN | 1957 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: FRED ZINNEMANN | CAST: CARY GRANT, GRACE KELLY

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## ▶ HOOSIERS

DRAMA | 1986 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
DAVID ANSPAUGH
CAST:
GENE HACKMAN, BARBARA HERSHEY, DENNIS HOPPER

What does it take for a local high school basketball team that has a history of losing to become champions? Just a coach from hell who uses the most unorthodox measures to build champs. In *Hoosiers*, Norman Dale (Gene Hackman) comes to the small town of Hickory and takes on the job of coaching the Hickory Hustlers, after a chequered career that ended abruptly when he punched one of the players. Now, he sees a chance to redeem himself by building champs out of proverbial losers. But he's not ready to mend his ways that make him enemy No. 1 for many around him. Especially when he hires the town drunk (Dennis Hopper) as his assistant. In the end, it's his do-or-die attitude that turns the fortunes of the team and creates the heartening David versus Goliath finale.

## ▶ HOTEL RWANDA

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★★

*Hotel Rwanda* is a searing indictment of racial and religious bigotry and the horrors that men perpetrate on each other in

DIRECTION:
TERRY GEORGE
CAST:
DON CHEADLE, JOAQUIN PHOENIX, NICK NOLTE

the name of ethnic cleansing. Hotel Rwanda, a euphemism for Hotel Milles Collines at Kiagali, is the only sane spot amidst a sea of violence. A wave of riots engulfed the country in 1944 when Hutu extremists unleashed a movement to exterminate Tutsi people, whom they branded as cockroaches. Hotel Manager Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle) steps in where the UN fails and transforms the five-star hotel into a refugee camp for Tutsis. Paul is a Hutu married to a Tutsi (Sophie Okonedo), but he manages to transcend the hatred around him and stand up for humanity. A gritty tale of survival and individual valour.

## ▶ THE HURRICANE

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
NORMAN JEWISON
CAST:
DENZEL WASHINGTON, VICELLOUS REON SHANNON

All white people aren't racists, and all black people aren't murderers: that's the premise that *The Hurricane* works upon and tries to set straight the skewed perception. The real story of Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter, a man whose dreams of winning the middleweight boxing title were destroyed when he was falsely implicated in a murder rap, the film is a grand tale of resurrection. Denzel Washington adds a rare dignity to this role. Carter's (Denzel Washington) attempts to live life despite the bleak surroundings – 20 years in prison for a crime he never committed – are awe-inspiring. There, in his dank cell, Carter discovers the joys of writing and reaches out to a world that had all but forgotten him. Although his autobiography, *The Sixteenth Round*, did get published, Carter remained behind bars, despite impassioned pleas from Bob Dylan and Muhammad Ali, among others. Years later, a young boy – another Black American – picked up his book for 25 cents, read it through the night and found a new hero: 'Hurricane' Carter. The beginning of a new friendship, at the end of which lay freedom. An intensely moving story.

## ▶ IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT

DRAMA | 1967 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
NORMAN JEWISON
CAST:
SIDNEY POITIER, ROD STEIGER, LEE GRANT
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS INCLUDING BEST ACTOR ROD STEIGER

A racist white Police Chief, Bill Gillespie (Rod Steiger), asks a black homicide detective, Virgil Tibbs (Sidney Poitier), to solve a local murder in a small Missouri town that has a pronounced white population. The blacks are expected to lead their lives here as invisible, undemanding souls. *In The Heat Of The Night* shows the coming together of two unlikely people, as Steiger tries to fight his prejudices and Poitier stands up to racial hatred and bias, upholding the inviolate spirit of equality.

## ▶ IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

DRAMA | 1946 | ★★★★

George Bailey (James Stewart) was the nice guy who almost finished last and stood on a bridge contemplating suicide, until

DIRECTION:
FRANK CAPRA
CAST:
JAMES STEWART, DONNA REED, LIONEL BARRYMORE, HENRY TRAVERS

a bumbling angel, Clarence Odbody (Henry Travers), showed him a dismal picture of the world without him. Bailey was the archetypal good guy, ever since childhood when he saved his brother from drowning, gave up his dreams of being an explorer to manage Bailey Building and Loan Society, the family business, after his father passed away, and spent his days making other people happy. But soon his troubles seemed insurmountable as the greedy Mr. Potter (Lionel Barrymore) tries to buy him out with his ill-gotten wealth, even as he bleeds dry the hapless folks of the town. But some advice by Clarence, his guardian angel, convinces our selfless hero to carry on his selfless deeds, or else the world would be a poorer place. *It's A Wonderful Life* by Frank Capra is an evergreen ode to the value of human life and the importance of virtue.

## ▶ LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: ROBERTO BENIGNI | CAST: ROBERTO BENIGNI, NICOLETTA BRASCHI, GIORGIO CANTARINI

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## ▶ MEN OF HONOUR

DRAMA | 2000 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
GEORGE TILLMAN JR.
CAST:
ROBERT DE NIRO, CUBA GOODING JR., CHARLIZE THERON

Based on the real life of Carl Brashear, the first African-American to join the US Navy, *Men Of Honour* is riveting stuff. Starting from the arid backwaters of Kentucky, where Carl wants to give up schooling to join his father – a sharecropper – the plot weaves through the high drama of American society where apartheid is still practised. In this sea of animosity, there is nothing to propel the young Navy Diver forward. Nothing but Carl's fierce ambition and his father's cherished mantra, "Never quit, do your best." And like all good sons, Carl (Cuba Gooding Jr.) never forgets and learns to combat it all: rejection from his peers, humiliation from his seniors and the injustice of an unequal society. In his quest for excellence, he finds a surrogate father, Master Chief "Billy" Sunday (Robert De Niro). In some ways, the Chief is a despicable character who would willingly follow the bidding of his seniors who hate Black Americans. But somewhere down the layers of cynicism and hate, old Billie still believes in justice and human dignity. Not to be missed.

## ▶ MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET

DRAMA | 1947 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GEORGE SEATON
**CAST:**
MAUREEN O'HARA, JOHN PAYNE, EDMUND GWENN
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS.

In *Miracle On 34th Street*, it's the season of good cheer and Macy's having its annual Santa Parade. But they don't have a Santa. So, the parade organizer, Maureen O'Hara, pulls in the local drunk (Edmund Gwenn) and asks him to step into Santa's jolly shoes. Now that's a role our bumbling drifter simply loves and lives. So much so, he ends up as a big hit with kids, except one. Maureen's daughter is a realist who doesn't believe in the myth. So does Santa really exist? The avuncular do-gooder finds himself in court trying to prove his existence against a cynical jury that questions his mental health. Truly, *Miracle On 34th Street* is the stuff fantasies are made of.

## ▶ THE MIRACLE WORKER

DRAMA | 1969 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ARTHUR PENN
**CAST:**
PATTY DUKE, ANNE BANCROFT
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

Seven-year-old Hellen Keller (Patty Duke) is rescued from her bleak world of sensory deprivation by a teacher, Anne Sullivan (Anne Bancroft), who uses unconventional methods to teach the physically challenged girl how to overcome her disabilities. *The Miracle Worker*, that inspired Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Black*, scored heavily because it represented the familiar theme of courage-against-adversity in a style that was devoid of sentimentality.

## ▶ MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON

DRAMA | 1939 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
FRANK CAPRA
**CAST:**
JAMES STEWART, JEAN ARTHUR, CLAUDE RAINS
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

Mr. Jefferson Smith (James Stewart), a young, idealistic boy scout, goes to Washington, joins the Senate and realizes America's seat of power doesn't run on integrity and fair play. Corruption seems to have gnawed into the very vitals of governance. Even as his ideals crumble, Mr. Smith decides to unmask the real face of political power. Helping him in his mission is the brazen reporter Clarissa (Jean Arthur) who came looking for a story but ended up as a comrade-in-arm. Frank Capra's engrossing *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington* laid down rules for political cinema in Hollywood at a time when no one ever thought of casting aspersion on Prez Roosevelt and his Congressmen.

## ▶ MY LEFT FOOT

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JIM SHERIDAN
**CAST:**
DANIEL DAY-LEWIS, BRENDA FRICKER

A biopic on the inspirational story of Christy Brown, who suffers from cerebral palsy, *My Left Foot* depicts the struggles, frustrations and trauma of a man who was determined to lead a normal life, despite having just his left foot. Daniel Day-Lewis puts in a towering portrayal of Christy Brown who learns not only how to fulfill his basic needs with his left foot, but also to

**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (DANIEL DAY-LEWIS).

paint and to write with it. The lack of any undercurrent of maudlin sentimentality only makes his struggles more awe-inspiring. *My Left Foot* shows there is no bar to human endeavour.

## ▶ NATIONAL VELVET

DRAMA | 1944 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
CLARENCE BROWN
**CAST:**
MICKEY ROONEY, ELIZABETH TAYLOR, ANNE REVERE
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

*National Velvet* is ostensibly a children's classic but remains a hot favourite with adults too. The film centres on the friendship between a horse and Velvet Brown, a 12-year-old girl, and shows her indomitable spirit that wins against insurmountable odds. Like most fairy tales, the underdog emerges the winner. More important, the film stars Elizabeth Taylor as the young girl who stands up to top professional jockeys. After winning a horse in the village lottery, Velvet convinces her cynical friend, Mi Taylor (Mickey Rooney), to train the horse to compete in the Grand National Steeplechase. Do they win? Now that's what inspirational stories are all about. The crafty trainer and the makeshift jockey manage to achieve the impossible, without any grandiose support.

## ▶ PAPILLON

DRAMA | 1973 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
FRANKLIN J. SCHAFFNER
**CAST:**
STEVE MCQUEEN, DUSTIN HOFFMAN

Based on *Papillon*, a French novel by Henri Charrière, the film is supposedly a real-life story. But for cinema buffs, this is perhaps the most daring prison escape story that showcases the never-say-die spirit of freedom, intrinsic to the human soul. Henri Charrière (Steve McQueen) is nicknamed Papillon, the butterfly, by inmates of Devil Island, because nothing seems to keep his spirit down. Neither prison torture nor prolonged solitary confinement can break the spirit of Papillon, determined to escape prison. Things become simpler after he convinces fellow prisoner Louis Dega (Dustin Hoffman) to finance his escape, in lieu of protecting him from those baying for his blood. *Papillon* is an odyssey of human grit and survival that proves that butterflies are free.

## ▶ PHILADELPHIA

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JONATHAN DEMME
**CAST:**
TOM HANKS, DENZEL WASHINGTON, ANTONIO BANDERAS

Andrew Beckett (Tom Hanks), a high-flying lawyer, dying of AIDS, fights back against the law firm that threw him out after discovering he was a homosexual and had AIDS. Before his boss (Jason Robards) came to know the truth, Andrew was his favourite employee, scaling the corporate ladder with unmitigated success. Beckett desperately looks for a lawyer to fight his case. Finally, he manages to convince Joe Miller (Denzel Washington), a black lawyer, who isn't unfamiliar with social prejudices. Initially, Miller too reacts to AIDS with discomfiture

**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (TOM HANKS).

but soon fights the ingrained bias and understands the trauma of the dying man. This is the beginning of a beautiful friendship and a gritty fight against conventional society. Both Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington pitch in towering portrayals in *Philadelphia*, a film that paved the way for alternate sexuality, marginalizing anyone who frowned upon it.

## ▶ PINOCCHIO

ANIMATION | 1940 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
HAMILTON LUSKE, BEN SHARPSTEEN
**CAST:**
VOICE OF DICKIE JONES, CLIFF EDWARDS
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

It took a snazzily dressed insect to give the world the most important lesson on morals. Yes, Jiminy Cricket's admonishment to puppet boy Pinocchio – always let your conscience be your guide – still rings true, as the Disney classic not only becomes the most authoritative rendition of Carlo Collodi's 1883 classic but also remains every adult's first comprehensive lesson on moral science. Rarely does a kid grow up without watching Pinocchio, and rarely does he lie without fearing that his nose would grow to an embarrassing length. *Pinocchio* is ageless with memorable songs like *When you wish upon a star*. More important, it's an inspiring take on how not to be a bad boy.

## ▶ THE PRIDE OF THE YANKEES

DRAMA | 1942 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** SAM WOOD | **CAST:** GARY COOPER, TERESA WRIGHT, BABE RUTH
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## ▶ THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS

DRAMA | 2006 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GABRIELE MUCCINO
**CAST:**
WILL SMITH, JAYDEN SMITH, THANDIE NEWTON

Will Smith may have lost out to Forest Whitaker for the Oscar for Best Actor, but he makes you cry with his soul-stirring performance in this delightful retake of a modern-day *Life Is Beautiful*. Here, the enemy may not be Nazism but the attempts of a father, Chris Gardner (Will Smith), to protect his son, Christopher (Jayden Smith), from the harshness of poverty are almost as heart-rending. Based on the true story of Chris Gardner, a struggling salesman, who successfully chased the American Dream and became a wealthy stockbroker – solely through his hard work, grit and the quintessential never-say-die spirit – *The Pursuit Of Happyness* is uplifting and inspirational. But the film's emotional core lies in the father-son relationship that is brilliantly essayed by Smith and his son-in-real-life. The duo walk the streets of San Francisco and end up spending nights in shelters and soup kitchens – once even in a public convenience – as Chris tries to change the quality of their lives with an internship at a brokerage. Success does come, but only after copious tears have been shed.

## ▶ RAY

MUSICAL | 2004 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
TAYLOR HACKFORD
**CAST:**
JAMIE FOXX
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (JAMIE FOXX).

As the blind American music legend, Ray Charles, who transcended boundaries between jazz, pop and country, Jamie Foxx delivers a power-packed performance in *Ray*. While Ray was travelling for one of his shows, the bus driver asked him, "How have you got around without a cane or a dog?" Ray answered, "You tell me how have YOU got around without a cane or a dog?" That is the spirit this film celebrates – almost like *Black* – the indomitable human spirit that fails to be subdued, no matter what. Ray fought his tragedies – he lost his little brother and his eyesight during childhood – to scale rare heights in the music world. And he did it all by himself. First, as a struggling Nat King Cole mimic in sawdust bars and then as a celebrated singer, besieged by autograph hunters. And all his magic came from keyboards of a piano that he first discovered in a rundown barn shop. *Ray* is a great period piece, with music that makes you want to get on the floor. You would have liked to see more of his personal life – Ray was reportedly addicted to heroin and women – but then, if *Ray* is about the uplifting power of music and the human spirit, it's quite okay.

## ▶ THE RIGHT STUFF

DRAMA | 1983 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
PHILIP KAUFFMAN
**CAST:**
SAM SHEPHERD, SCOTT GLENN, ED HARRIS, DENNIS QUAID
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS.

Watch the first American astronauts as they go up in space and celebrate the quintessential American hero who has been the mainstay of Hollywood lore. The Mercury Astronauts are a bunch of ballsy space cowboys, selected for their skills and their poster boy charisma, since NASA wants the world to know it won't be left behind in the space race, once Russia sends up the Sputnik. And as the cut-throat Space Jam begins, Chuck Yeager (Sam Shepherd), the pioneering real-life test pilot who first broke the sound barrier at 24 years, sits back and laconically watches the national circus. Because before the Mercury crew drew up new benchmarks, Yeager had already done everything, even though he never became an astronaut. *The Right Stuff* salutes pioneers who have taken civilization several notches up the ladder.

## ▶ SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

WAR | 1998 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: TOM HANKS, MATT DAMON, TOM SIZEMORE

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## ▶ SCHINDLER'S LIST

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION: STEVEN SPIELBERG | CAST: LIAM NEESON, BEN KINGSLEY, RALPH FIENNES

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## ▶ SEABISCUIT

DRAMA | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
GARY ROSS
CAST:
CHRIS COOPER, JEFF BRIDGES, TOBEY MAGUIRE

*Seabiscuit* is the classic underdog-as-hero story where a failed jockey (Tobey Maguire), an unknown horse and an unconventional horse trainer (Chris Cooper) who believes in love more than discipline, end up creating a sporting sensation in America during the Great Depression. And the invincible spirit of the bow-legged horse becomes representative of the people around him: Seabiscuit's half-blind, loveless jockey, Red Pollard, his owner Charles (Jeff Bridges), heartbroken after the death of his child, his horse trainer who seems to have lost all purpose in life and the depressed Americans who desperately need something to lift their spirits. Thrilling drama.

## ▶ SHANE

DRAMA | 1953 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
GEORGE STEVENS
CAST:
ALAN LADD, JEAN ARTHUR
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

A classic Western, *Shane* is the story of a gunslinger who wants to live life as a pacifist. But circumstances force him to pick up his gun again. The loner Shane (Alan Ladd) seeks redemption as a simple farmhand working for the Joe Starrett family in remote Wyoming in the 1890s. However, a ruthless rancher (Emile Meyer) is trying to force the family out from their land. He hires a gunman (Jack Palance) to terrorize the farmer community and steal their land. Shane is the last action hero who knows how to answer a bullet for a bullet and ends up as the valiant evil-buster. A great performance by Alan Ladd adds a new dimension to the charisma of the vigilante.

## ▶ THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION

CRIME | 1994 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: FRANK DARABONT | CAST: TIM ROBBINS, MORGAN FREEMAN

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## ▶ THE SOUND OF MUSIC

DRAMA | 1965 | ★★★★

DIRECTION: ROBERT WISE | CAST: JULIE ANDREWS, CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER

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## ▶ TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

DRAMA | 1962 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: ROBERT MULLIGAN | CAST: GREGORY PECK, MARY BADHAM

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## ▶ WHAT DREAMS MAY COME

DRAMA | 1998 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
VINCENT WARD
CAST:
ROBIN WILLIAMS, CUBA GOODING JR., ANNABELLA SCIORRA
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

*What Dreams May Come* is a surreal trip through heaven and hell with Chris Nielsen (Robin Williams), a fond husband, who misses his wife (Annabella Sciorra) even after he dies in an accident. Although the afterlife sees him uniting with his two children, who had died before him, he is the perfect family man who wants the family picture to be complete even in the celestial world. A paean to love, *What Dreams May Come* is a visual delight, where heaven is a vibrant-coloured celestial city, replete with angels, while hell is a dark, grimy place, devoid of colour and joy.

## ▶ WIZARD OF OZ

DRAMA | 1939 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION: VICTOR FLEMING | CAST: JUDY GARLAND, FRANK MORGAN, RAY BOLGER

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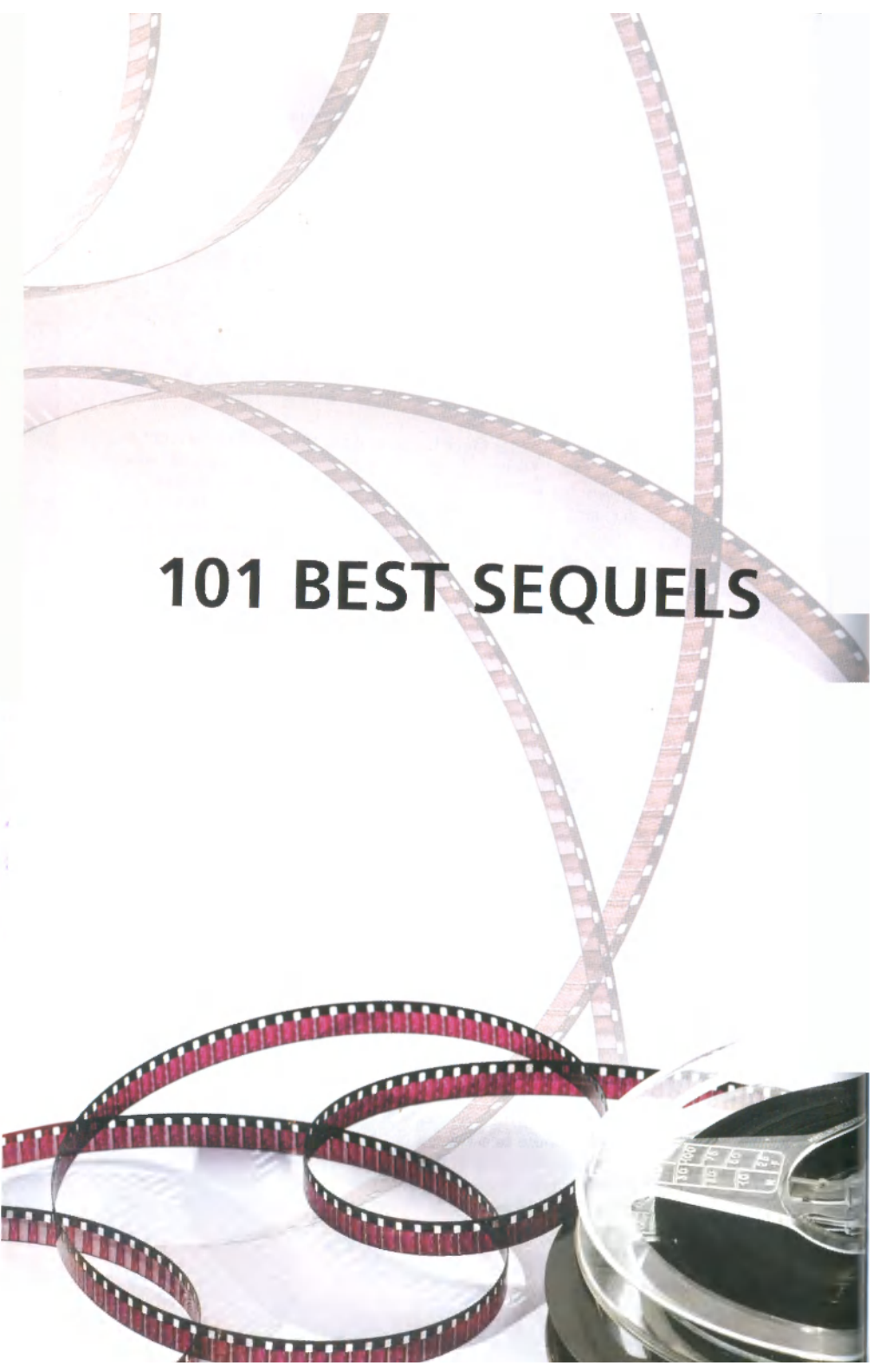
## ▶ YANKEE DOODLE DANDY

DRAMA | 1942 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
MICHAEL CURTIZ
CAST:
JAMES CAGNEY, JOAN LESLIE, WALTER HUSTON
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (JAMES CAGNEY).

*Yankee Doodle Dandy* is a grand biopic that celebrates the life of Broadway sensation, George C. Cohan, who was honoured by President Roosevelt for composing popular patriotic numbers like *Over there*, *Born on the Fourth July* and *You're a Grand Old Flag*. The film is a rousing, flag-waving musical, showcasing a hero who lived his life like a Broadway musical, full of vibrant song and dance. And even when he's invited to the White House to meet the Prez, he ends up tap-dancing down the stairs. The ebullient life and times of the singer-dancer unfold through a series of flashbacks, as the actor narrates his life to Roosevelt in the Oval Officer. Cohan has been invited to the White House because he has been pulled out of retirement to play the President in a Broadway musical designed as a paean to Roosevelt, just before the onset of war. *Yankee Doodle Dandy* is uplifting drama, with riveting performance by James Cagney as Cohan.

# 101 BEST SEQUELS



## ▶ STAR WARS IV: A NEW HOPE

SCI-FI | 1977 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GEORGE LUCAS
**CAST:**
MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER, ALEC GUINNESS
**AWARD:**
SIX OSCARS.

Science fiction acquired a cult status akin to works of Shakespeare with George Lucas' operatic fairy tale about a hero who sets out to rescue a princess in outer space. Set against an intergalactic war where heroes of the Rebel Alliance are fighting against the evil Empire headed by a megalomaniac ruler (Peter Cushing) and his deadly lieutenant Darth Vader, *Star Wars* focuses on adventures of Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and his comrades, brave knight Obi Wan Kenobi (Alec Guinness), and daredevil mercenary Hans Solo (Harrison Ford). The trio is on a death-defying mission to set free Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) from the clutches of the Empire and must combat the superhuman and malevolent Darth Vader. *Star Wars 1V: A New Hope*, a milestone in Hollywood, gave birth to a powerful franchise which saw Lucas carry forth the *Star Wars* saga through six films which included *The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Return of the Jedi*, *Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace*, *Star Wars: Episode II – The Attack of the Clones* and *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith*. The saga's ageless appeal lies more in its characters and special effects than in the story.

## ▶ STAR WARS V: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

SCI-FI | 1980 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
IRVIN KERSHNER
**CAST:**
MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

Although *Star Wars V: The Empire Strikes Back* is the second film that hit the screen after the legendary *Star Wars IV: A New Hope* in 1977, it is actually fifth in the sequel. It doesn't take off from where the first film ended, except that the rebellion is still on and the rebels are on the run. More important, Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and maverick Hans Solo (Harrison Ford) have now become rivals for the hand of Princess Leia and end up separated in the war against Darth Vader. While Skywalker seeks refuge on the swampy planet, Dagobah, under the tutelage of Jedi master Yoda, Hans flees with Leia to an asteroid field and tries to protect her from the Vader menace. With a darker tone, the promise of a do-or-die battle in the future and a canvas bursting forth with scintillating special effects, this sequel is serious sci-fi stuff.

## ▶ STAR WARS V1: RETURN OF THE JEDI

SCI-FI | 1983 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
RICHARD MARQUAND
**CAST:**
MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER

The intergalactic crusade must go on ... and so must the fun and games. Gone is the dark tenor of *The Empire Strikes Back*. In *Star Wars VI: Return Of The Jedi*, along with overtones of war between good and evil, you find the return of fizz, a characteristic of the saga's first film, *Star Wars IV: A New Hope*. However, in *Star Wars VI: Return Of The Jedi* the most spectacular are made-to-order monsters that the rebels must counter like Jabba the Hutt who has imprisoned dashing Hans Solo or the scary desert monster made of sand and teeth. And most of the fun comes from trademark characters – Obi-Wan Kenobi, Chewbacca, Yoda R2D2, C-3Po – and their histrionics. Eventually, the heroics of humans, Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia and Hans Solo, carry this sequel through strange, unexplored lands that lend a whole new dimension to imagination.

## ▶ STAR WARS: EPISODE 1 – THE PHANTOM MENACE

SCI-FI | 1999 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GEORGE LUCAS
**CAST:**
LIAM NEESON, EWAN MACGREGOR, NATALIE PORTMAN, JAKE LLOYD

George Lucas returned to the *Star War* territory after a gap of 16 years. By then, his earlier three episodes of the sci-fi saga had acquired a cult status as a classic tale of good versus evil. In *Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace*, Lucas sculpts a prequel to the earlier trilogy, designing this as the first episode where Jedi knight Qui Gon Jinn (Liam Neeson) and his apprentice Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan MacGregor) are on an intergalactic mission to protect the teen ruler of Naboo, Queen Amidala (Natalie Portman). Their adventure leads to planet Tatooine where they meet young Anakin Skywalker (Jake Lloyd), a slave boy, showcasing the potential to grow into a hero for the Force. *Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace* introduces most of the regular characters of the *Star War* franchise and builds up the tension adequately.

## ▶ STAR WARS: EPISODE 11 – ATTACK OF THE CLONES

SCI-FI | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
GEORGE LUCAS
**CAST:**
EWAN MACGREGOR, NATALIE PORTMAN, HAYDEN CHRISTENSEN, SAMUEL L. JACKSON

In *Star Wars: Episode 11 – Attack of the Clones*, Anakin Skywalker (Hayden Christensen) is a rebellious young Jedi apprentice who has his hormones charging. First, he wants his master, Obi-Wan Kenobi, to finish his tutelage fast and give him an opportunity to prove his knighthood. Second, he needs to contend with his growing affection for Queen Amidala (Natalie Portman) whom he has been called upon to protect. But while Skywalker is in the midst of his travels between Naboo and Tatooine, his love story is interrupted by the sinister plot of mysterious Count Doku (Christopher Lee) and evil Sith Lord Darth Sidious (Ian McDiarmid). Highlights of *Star Wars: Episode 11 – Attack of the*

*Clones* include a mysterious planet that manufactures clones, the coming-of-age of Yoda and the final battle sequence among Jedi knights, clones and androids.

## ▶ STAR WARS III: REVENGE OF THE SITH

SCI-FI | 2005 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
GEORGE LUCAS
CAST:
HAYDEN CHRISTENSEN, EWAN MCGREGOR, NATALIE PORTMAN

*Star Wars III: Revenge Of The Sith*, the final episode, isn't just about shooting stars and flying machines. It is an ethical take on good and evil, a political parable about conflict between democracy and totalitarianism. The film begins with the young, blonde archetypal WASP Jedi Knight, Anakin Skywalker. He is optimistic, brave, righteous and committed to justice, democracy and the Republic. His tutor and mentor, legendary Obi Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), sees in him the hope for a future when the intergalactic war shall end, the dark side of the Force will be tamed and democracy shall reign. The film ends with Skywalker in the black metallic body suit of Darth Vader, the epitome of evil, which has been fused on him to hide his singed body and soul. The light sabre of his Jedi master has gouged out the last shreds of goodness from him. *Star Wars III: Revenge Of The Sith* skillfully establishes the drift of Skywalker from Light into Dark. He crosses the line for two reasons: love for his wife and lust for power. In that sense, he becomes a tragic hero like Macbeth. The film is topical and has riveting special effects and sabre- fights.

## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

FANTASY | 2001 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS
CAST:
DANIEL RADCLIFFE, ALAN RICKMAN, EMMA WATSON

Harry Potter comes to town, and how! Complete with wizardry, hocus-focus and make-believe that makes *Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone* such a mesmerizing film. From the very first shot when giant Hagrid walks into the Muggles' home and rescues Harry from his underdog existence, to the final confrontation with wicked Voldemort and evil Professor Snape, *Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone* is fantasy at its riveting best. Hogwarts for young wizards is the school you desperately want to visit, even as esoteric courses of potion-making, broom-flying and wand-wielding make real-life school syllabi utterly boring. As for the game of Quidditch – now when can our friendly neighbourhood stadium host something so fantastic? The film's beauty lies not only in its computer-generated supra-normal effects, but also in its characterization. Harry and his friends, super-smart Hermione and the somewhat nerdish Ron Weasly are a treat to watch.

## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
CHRIS COLUMBUS
**CAST:**
DANIEL RADCLIFFE, EMMA WATSON

In *Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets*, Harry is older, wiser, stronger and ready to take on the world that grows hostile with each passing day. A world where evil comes sometimes as an unscrupulous student, a slithering serpent, an unfriendly ghost or a gargantuan spider. But always as the cohort of You-Know-Who, determined to reclaim the world – and Hogwarts – for the wicked wizards. It's the same old battle between good and evil fought against JK Rowling's magicscape of wizards, Muggles, Mudbloods and Hobgoblins. Only this time, the evil has grown more menacing. Lord Voldemort is getting desperate in his attempts to annihilate Harry. The innocence of the first adventure has been replaced with the tumult of pre-teen years. Harry, Ron and Hermione return to Hogwarts for the second term, only to find evil lurking behind every corner. Quidditch has become more violent. The washroom is the haunt of a wailing ghost. The water pipes are expressways for the in-house Anaconda and the water faucet is the entrance to the chamber of horrors. All it needs is a twist to open the floodgates of chills and thrills which see Ron wondering why they can't run after butterflies instead of bloodthirsty spiders and Hermione ends up 'petrified' mid-adventure. The only hero is Harry who must save Hogwarts and its future by padlocking the Chamber of Secrets. Does he succeed? You bet. If Rowling ensures that Potter books are unputdownable, director Chris Columbus sees to it that viewers walk out of the second film, lusting for the third, fourth, fifth ...

## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKHABAN

FANTASY | 2004 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ALFONSO CUARON
**CAST:**
DANIEL RADCLIFFE, EMMA WATSON, GARY OLDMAN, EMMA THOMPSON

In *Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkhaban*, Harry is a teenager, prey to teenage angst. Blame it on his raging hormones. However, unlike friends Ron and Hermione, he hasn't found his love yet. The film opens with an angry Harry who causes his troublesome Aunt to inflate and float away. And he is overcome with rage as he battles a battery of new enemies. That's where the film's USP lies. It shows a darker underworld, with many beasts and demons that are hell-bent on removing the good out of Muggle world. And the only way they can do so is by weakening the power of the Wizard world. So, you have Dementors sucking out the soul of Harry with their kiss of death. Werewolves threaten to sink their teeth into his flesh while Rat-Man, who first betrayed his father, now intends to betray him. And there is the mysterious Sirius Black whose credentials appear murky. Specially when the professor of Divination (Emma Thomson) keeps looking into her crystal ball and

making dire predictions about his death. Add to this Hogwarts' Bratpack – Malfoy and Inc. – and you have a seething cauldron of treachery and death-round-the-corner. Does it work? Superbly!

## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

DRAMA | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MIKE NEWELL
**CAST:**
DANIEL RADCLIFFE, EMMA WATSON, RUPERT GRINT, RALPH FIENNES

If you thought Harry Potter comes of age in *The Half-Blood Prince*, think again. For in *Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire*, he loses his playfulness and gets all awkward and adolescent. It's a dark, moody, autumnal look at mysteries and magical spells that lie between the walls of Hogwarts, with its eclectic mix of good and bad students, evil and benign wizards, pro and anti-Voldemort-ers. But the film's scariest part is its climax when He Who Shall Not Be Named arises in the form of Ralph Fiennes who plays Voldemort with such unbridled vile that he's mesmerizing. There's lightning, wind, mist, hellish music, a smoky cauldron and a helpless Harry who watches the evil unfold, as he lies impaled on a stake like a New Age Christ. The entire film is one long Triwizard tournament, with an overkill of spells, monsters and macabre moments. Nevertheless, it's breathtaking in places, especially when Harry battles monsters and emerges victorious. Also, it highlights team spirit, ethics and sacrifice in a world where competition is the rule and success the buzzword.

## ▶ HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
DAVID YATES
**CAST:**
DANIEL RADCLIFFE, RUPERT GRINT, EMMA WATSON

"What's happening to me?" yells Potter, sending the avuncular Dumbledore and his faithful friends, Ron and Hermione, into a tizzy. "Why am I always angry? I feel I'm turning BAD!" he exclaims, setting the tone for *Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix*. Welcome to Harry, the harried teen, who knows life's not going to be easy. Bigger issues are at stake as You Know Who and his army threaten the wizard world. In keeping with the film's tone, the world has become dark and grim. There is

no fun left in the corridors of Hogwarts as young wizards and witches try to gear up for the battle that looms ahead. Adding to the students' woes is the fact that the venal head, Dolores Umbridge (Imelda Staunton), has replaced Dumbledore. Umbridge is the stuff nightmares are made of. Despite her powder pink attire and a room full of kitties, she is a terror. But she fails to teach students the Defense Against the Dark Arts, leaving them to form a covert body, the Dumbledore Army, and hold secret classes under Harry. And though there is the usual fare of charms, spells and special effects, Umbridge, who is meanness incarnate, is the scene-stealer.

## ▶ LORD OF THE RINGS: FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

ACTION | 2001 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
PETER JACKSON
**CAST:**
ELIJAH WOOD, SEAN ASTIN, VIGGO MORTENSEN, IAN MCKELLEN
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS.

*Lord Of The Rings: Fellowship Of The Ring* is a gripping celluloid version of J.R.R. Tolkien's masterly tome, *Lord Of The Rings*, which created a fantasy world and a fantastic boy hero, much before Harry Potter. The journey of the endearing hobbit Frodo, through treacherous Middle Earth to destroy the powerful Ring he has inherited, is the stuff of which epics are made. More so when Jackson chooses to treat this adventure as something more than mere child's play. Frodo and his friends must destroy the Ring that has been forged by a malevolent wizard as a source of dark power. And the sole place it can be destroyed is the dreaded Mount Doom in Mordor where Frodo can only reach after battling demonic turncoat wizard Saruman (Christopher Lee) and his army of Dark Riders. Frodo has his corps of friends: benevolent wizard Gandalf, human warrior Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen), and elf marksman (Orlando Bloom). The first in a three-part series, this one leaves you asking for more.

## ▶ LORD OF THE RINGS: TWO TOWERS

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PETER JACKSON
**CAST:**
ELIJAH WOOD, VIGGO MORTENSEN, IAN MCKELLEN

In *Lord Of The Rings: Two Towers*, the Fellowship has been broken. Middle Earth is still in dire straits. The dark forces of the evil Lord Sauron are multiplying and growing more menacing. And the hope of deliverance is again with hobbit Frodo (Elijah Wood), his friend Sam (Sean Austin), the elegant Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) and the majestic wizard Gandalf (Ian Mckellen). Aiding them this time is a mysterious new friend, Gollum (a computer generated character), the keeper of the Ring, who now joins Frodo as his guide. Director Peter Jackson takes off from *Lord Of The Rings: Fellowship Of The Ring* with no preface to help the uninitiated. No sweat, for even those who hardly know about adventures of hobbits are soon swept away by the larger-than-life canvas. For Jackson approaches Tolkien as an action adventure, replete with Spielbergian special effects.

So, you have the mumbo-jumbo sequences of talking trees, walking woods, smoking skies and fire spewing mountains. And you have the larger-than-life battle sequences where columns and columns of metalled men combat with wizards and super heroes.

## ▶ LORD OF THE RING: RETURN OF THE KING

DRAMA | 2003 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
PETER JACKSON
**CAST:**
VIGGO MORTENSEN, IAN MCKELLEN, ELIJAH WOOD, LIV TYLER
**AWARDS:**
ELEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

J. R. R. Tolkien's epical clash between good and evil – almost biblical in intent – ends with *Lord Of The Ring: Return Of The King*. Director Peter Jackson skillfully uses New Zealand's rare beauty to create the mystique of Middle Earth. Imaginatively, he creates a whole range of living species – hobbits, elves, orgs and wizards. Hobbits Frodo Baggins and Sam must save the human race or else ... The director almost hijacks you and throws you into the vortex of a battlefield where survival depends on individual valour. Or else, you find yourself on the edge of a precipice with Frodo, trying to find out who the traitor is – co-Hobbit Sam or crazy Gollum. The Trilogy ends with the battle before Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) becomes king and the Age of Man begins. Sauron's forces have attacked Gondor's capital in his final siege against mankind. Gandalf desperately tries to re-establish the equilibrium of Middle Earth, to coronate Aragorn as King, and to give Frodo a chance to complete his quest by returning the Ring. While travelling across treacherous enemy terrain, Frodo must rely increasingly on Sam and Gollum as the Ring continues to test his allegiance and, ultimately, his humanity. Not to be missed.

## ▶ DR. NO

ACTION | 1962 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
TERENCE YOUNG
**CAST:**
SEAN CONNERY, URSULA ANDRESS, JOSEPH WISEMAN

A glorious debut for one of Hollywood's most popular franchises, *Dr. No* projects James Bond, a celluloid version of Ian Fleming's fictional figure, as a dauntless hero who saves the world from evil megalomaniacs. Sean Connery slips effortlessly into the role of invincible special agent Bond who is licensed to kill and lives life on the wild side, while bullets fly and beautiful girls sigh. On a mission to find out the truth behind the murder of his colleagues, Bond reaches the mysterious island of Dr. No (Joseph Wiseman), only to uncover a sinister plot that is aimed at wiping out the US space program. *Dr. No* marks the beginning of a whole new genre in Hollywood and showcases all its irresistible trademarks – slick action, sleek gadgets, oomph girls and double-dyed villains – juxtaposed against the smart-talking and sharp-shooting Bond.

## ▶ FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

ACTION | 1963 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GUY HAMILTON
**CAST:**
SEAN CONNERY, GERT FROBE, HONOUR BLACKMAN
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

In *From Russia With Love*, the British super agent (Sean Connery) is hot on the trail of a top secret Russian decoding device. He ends up in conflict with SPECTRE and its two top operatives, a former KGB agent and a Russian chess master, who have meticulously plotted a web of deceit and murder. Bond finds a friend in the beautiful Russian defector, Tataiana Romanov (Daniela Bianchi), and a Turkish ally, Kerim Bey (Pedro Armendariz). The highlight of *From Russia With Love* is its gritty climax shot on Orient Express, as Bond engages in fisticuffs with the bad guys.

## ▶ GOLDFINGER

ACTION | 1964 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
TERENCE YOUNG
**CAST:**
SEAN CONNERY, DANIELA BIANCHI, PEDRO ARMENDARIZ

Is James Bond a man of style or a man of action? With *Goldfinger*, we settle the question. For Sean Connery effectively exhibits the various attributes of the super secret British agent. With some of the best one-liners and carefully orchestrated action cuts, *Goldfinger* proves that Agent 007 can kill, both by his wit and weapons. Here, Bond takes on the ingenious gold-addict, Auric Goldfinger (Gert Frobe), a bullion dealer, who wants to knock down Fort Knox. And the only man who can stop him from fulfilling his devious plan is Bond who must battle Oddjob (Harold Sakata), the deadly henchman, who kills with his Frisbee-like bowler. Watch Bond stare death in the face, without batting an eyelid. Undoubtedly, *Goldfinger* represents the golden era (1960s) of the Bond franchise.

## ▶ THUNDERBALL

ACTION | 1965 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
TERENCE YOUNG
**CAST:**
SEAN CONNERY, ADOLFO CELI, LUCIANA PALAZZI
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST VISUAL EFFECTS.

James Bond spends most of the time underwater in the ocean, trying to deactivate two nuclear missiles that have been stolen by mean man Emilio Largo (Adolfo Celi), who threatens to blow up a major city in the US or England if the governments do not pay up. With NATO on ransom, there is only one man who can save the world: 007 who shifts the scene of action to Bahamas. Watch out for the shark-infested pool and for the superb underwater photography. *Thunderball* was remade as *Never Say Never Again* to mark the return of Sean Connery after he slipped out of Bond's shoes in 1971.

## ▶ YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE

ACTION | 1967 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
LEWIS GILBERT

An American and a Soviet rocket are attacked by a mysterious spacecraft that lands somewhere in Japan. Bond is sent to Japan to save the world that is poised on the brink of World War III. However, his Japanese adventure doesn't match up to earlier

CAST:
SEAN CONNERY, AKIKO WAKABAYASHI

films, despite having the requisite dose of girls, gadgets and goons. Maybe because Roald Dahl's script tries to pass off Bond as a Japanese peasant! Now that's stretching the imagination a bit too far. *You Only Live Twice* unmasks the head of the organization (SPECTRE) that has been troubling Bond for quite some time now. Ernst Stavro Blofeld, who was just a menacing voice in *From Russia With Love*, appears as Donald Pleasance, a mild-mannered meanie, who does not quite match up to the menace.

## ▶ ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE

ACTION | 1969 | ★★½

DIRECTION:
PETER R. HUNT
CAST:
GEORGE LAZENBY, DIANA RIGGS, TELLY SAVALAS

Australian model George Lazenby's solitary stint as the charismatic super spy remains the single thorn in the flesh of many James Bond purists. They were unable to accept Lazenby in the role of Bond as he seemed a mere wooden avatar of the smooth-talking, suave, flamboyant hero. *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, Bond saves Diana Riggs, a European mobster's daughter, who offers to help him find Ernst Blofeld (Telly Savalas), his arch-enemy, who has dogged him in many escapades. This time, Blofeld is in possession of a killer virus at his Alpine laboratory, manned by an army of *femmes fatales*. Apart from *Casino Royale*, this was the only film in which the playboy actually falls in love with a mobster's daughter.

## ▶ DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

ACTION | 1971 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
GUY HAMILTON
CAST:
SEAN CONNERY, JILL ST. JOHN, CHARLES GREY

After George Lazenby's commercial flop in his portrayal as Bond *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, the producers brought back Sean Connery in the role he had patented so well. Only this time in *Diamonds Are Forever*, age had begun to take its toll and Connery wasn't the smart, sassy, youthful vigilante anymore. In this film, Bond is again pitted against old foe Blofeld (Charles Grey) who wants to build a giant diamond-powered laser that would hold the world to ransom and fill his coffers with wealth. But for 007, who manages to take time off from his dalliance with firebrand Tiffany Case (Jill St. John) to outwit his foe.

## ▶ LIVE AND LET DIE

ACTION | 1973 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
GUY HAMILTON
CAST:
ROGER MOORE, JANE SEYMOUR, YAPHET KOTTO

In *Live And Let Die*, Sean Connery finally bids farewell as Roger Moore steps into the shoes of James Bond. Fans found Moore a fitting replacement as he embarked on a new mission to investigate the death of three agents. It's a search that leads him to New York and show off his survival skills in Harlem, Caribbean islands and a Lousiana bayou. And who is his arm candy? The delectable tarot queen, Solitaire (Jane Seymour). His archrival? The mysterious heroin-smuggler, Kananga (Yaphet Kotto), with his enigmatic henchman, Tee Hee (Julius Harris). With Moore's wry humour and stiff-upper lip pizzazz, the franchise got back on track in this film.

## ▶ THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN

ACTION | 1974 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
GUY HAMILTON
CAST:
ROGER MOORE, CHRISTOPHER LEE, BRITT ECKLAND, MAUD ADAMS

James Bond receives a golden bullet with 007 inscribed on it. Next, he's on the hunt for the mysterious assassin, Francisco Scaramanga (Christopher Lee), who's waiting to kill him, even though he secretly admires the secret agent. Scaramanga is also at loggerheads with the British government since both are competing to build a solar energy converter that could be the answer to the world's energy crisis. Technically, *The Man With The Golden Gun* is regarded as the cheesiest of Bond films and doesn't have much to boast of, except the final car chase where Scaramanga literally flies off. For cheesecake, there's Mary Goodnight (Britt Eckland), Bond's clumsy assistant, and Andrea (Maud Adams), the bad guy's mistress, with an evil eye on 007.

## ▶ THE SPY WHO LOVED ME

ACTION | 1977 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
LEWIS GILBERT
CAST:
ROGER MOORE, BARBARA BACH, CURT JURGENS, RICHARD KIEL

With great action, a thriller's pace and a warm love story, *The Spy Who Loved Me* is undoubtedly Roger Moore's best role as 007. Beginning with the opening shootout on the treacherous ski-slopes till the final underwater gun battle, Bond is embroiled in an adrenalin-pumping adventure that keeps you glued to your seat. He's locked in conflict with megalomaniac Carl Stromberg (Curt Jurgens) who wants to destroy the world with two stolen nuke warheads and build an underwater civilization. Bond teams up with spunky KGB agent Major Anya Amasova (Barbara Bach) who promises to kill him at the first opportunity because he's killed her love. Obviously, the threat proves to be less potent than 007's deadly charm. *The Spy Who Loved Me* also saw the debut of one of the most charismatic villains of the franchise: the steel-toothed Jaws (Richard Kiel) who would like to bite Bond's head off, if only he could. An absolute entertainer.

## ▶ MOONRAKER

ACTION | 1979 | ★★½

**DIRECTION:**
LEWIS GILBERT
**CAST:**
ROGER MOORE, LOIS CHILE, MICHAEL LONSDALE

When evil megalomaniac Hugo Drax (Michael Lonsdale) steals a space shuttle to wipe out Earth's population, the British government airlifts 007 to outer space on an SOS mission. Bond's never alone and has CIA scientist, Dr. Holly Goodhead (Lois Chile), for company. But *Moonraker* is quite a dispirited adventure, wherein even the macabre Jaws fail to add a bite of excitement. The extended space sequence seems an attempt to match up to the special effects of films like *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* that were spearheading a sci-fi revolution in the '70s pop culture.

## ▶ FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

ACTION | 1981 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN GGLEN
**CAST:**
ROGER MOORE, CAROLE BOUQUET, JULIAN GLOVER

In *For Your Eyes Only*, the Brits have lost the ATAC equipment, a weapon's system that controls the country's nuclear submarines. The device must be found before it falls into the hands of Russians. So, James Bond (Roger Moore) is sent to the exotic locales of Greece and Italy to wrest back the device from bad guy Aristotle Kristatos (Julian Glover). Joining Bond in his crusade is the beautiful Melina (Carole Bouquet) who wants to avenge her father's death. Kristatos remains one of the most forgettable Bond villains in this adequately entertaining caper.

## ▶ OCTOPUSSY

ACTION | 1983 | ★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN GLEN
**CAST:**
ROGER MOORE, MAUD ADAMS, LOUIS JOURDAN, KRISTINA WAYBORN, KABIR BEDI

James Bond (Roger Moore) comes to India and ends up romping around in Delhi in Tarzan's costume, with Kabir Bedi pitching in as Gobind, the *desi* presence in *Octopussy* that has one of the most convoluted plots in the Bond series. Bond is hunting down gem smuggler Kamal Khan (Louis Jourdan) after a British agent is found dead. Somewhere down the line of action, he encounters Octopussy (Maud Adams), the leader of a gang of jewel thieves, only to realize that there are Russian nukes and a mad general (Steven Berkoff) in the picture too. Along with these is a devious Russian plot to invade the West. Simply a case of too many tentacles.

## ▶ NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN

ACTION | 1983 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
IRVIN KERSHNER
**CAST:**
SEAN CONNERY, KLAUS MARIA BRANDUER, MAX

It was a lucky year for Bond fans when two Bonds – Sean Connery and Roger Moore – vied for their attention. Expectedly, Connery convincingly proved that he was the better Bond, despite having returned to the role after a long gap of 12 years. Thematically, *Never Say Never Again* is a remake of *Thunderball*, where Bond has to rescue two stolen American nuclear

VON SYDOW, BARBARA CARRERA, KIM BASINGER

warheads from SPECTRE before they are detonated. But more than Bond, it is the bad guys who steal the show this time, with Klaus Maria Branduer playing the arch-villain Largo with great finesse and Max von Sydow recreating the best Blofeld. Barbara Carrera too is delightfully evil as Fatima Blush, the woman who's literally smoked out when things get too hot.

## ▶ A VIEW TO KILL

ACTION | 1985 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN GLEN
CAST:
ROGER MOORE, CHRISTOPHER WALKEN, GRACE JONES, TANYA ROBERTS

In *A View To Kill*, psychopath Max Zorin (Christopher Walken) has his own chaos theory. He wants to wipe out Silicon Valley with a giant tidal wave that would spell the end of the tech revolution. Enter the invincible James Bond (Roger Moore) who joins hand with geologist Stacey Sutton (Tanya Roberts) and races through relentless chases and death-defying leaps in Artic Russia, Paris and San Francisco. It's curtain call for Roger Moore's Bond act with *A View To Kill*, after having played Ian Fleming's debonair hero in seven films.

## ▶ THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS

ACTION | 1987 | ★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN GLEN
CAST:
TIMOTHY DALTON, MARYAM D'ABO, JEROEN KRABBE, JOE DON BAKER

Timothy Dalton dons the mantle of 007 in *The Living Daylights* but doesn't succeed in projecting James Bond's charisma, even though Fleming fans insist that Dalton's version of Bond comes closest to the author's portrait. For Bond fans, used to Sean Connery and Roger Moore, Dalton was a disappointment. This was because he divested the double agent of all his wry humour, flamboyance and played him straight. In his first venture, he ends up chasing a KGB agent (John Rhys-Davis) after a defector (Jeroen Krabbe) implicates him in an assassination plot. But Bond soon shifts targets when he meets Whitaker (Joe Don Baker), a renegade US arms dealer, who is the brain behind the mayhem. *The Living Daylights* is average fare, with tepid romance and tame action.

## ▶ LICENSE TO KILL

ACTION | 1989 | ★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN GLEN
CAST:
TIMOTHY DALTON, CAREY LOWELL, ROBERT DAVI, BENICIO DEL TORO

In *License To Kill*, James Bond is terribly angry and hungry for revenge. His buddy CIA agent Felix Leiter has been attacked by a mean drug lord (Robert Davi) and 007 is even ready to oppose his paymasters in order to pay back violence with violence. So much so, MI6 revokes his license to kill and tries to capture him as he goes rogue and embarks on a personal mission that has nothing to do with Her Majesty's Secret Service. Watch out for a very young Benicio Del Toro and for a meatier role for gadget wizard Q who stands by the renegade agent, when London bays for his blood.

## ▶ GOLDENEYE

ACTION | 1995 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ROGER SPOTTISWOODE
CAST:
PIERCE BROSNAN, JONATHAN PRICE, MICHELLE YEOH, TERI HATCHER

In *GoldenEye*, James Bond returns after a hiatus of six years. And in order to fit in with the 1990s, he acquires a silken smooth avatar with Pierce Brosnan stepping in as Fleming's super agent. More important, Judi Dench now heads MI6 as the hard-balled M and barks orders to 007, heralding the march of the feminazis. Also, Bond's getaway gizmo, Aston Martin, has been replaced by a sleek BMW as our superhero tries to save London from the Russian mafia that has stolen a space-based weapons program called GoldenEye. It's a dangerous, action-packed mission that sees him bonding with beautiful computer programmer Izabella Scorupco, and warding off renegade agent 006 (Sean Bean) and psychotic Famke Jansen who has a penchant for squeezing men to death between her beautiful legs. Girls, gadgets and gusto: the franchise was reborn after the dismal Dalton era.

## ▶ TOMORROW NEVER DIES

ACTION | 1997 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
MARTIN CAMPBELL
CAST:
PIERCE BROSNAN, SEAN BEAN, IZABELLA SCORUPCO, FAMKE JANSEN

In *Tomorrow Never Dies*, a media baron (Jonathan Price) wants to start World War III to boost the ratings of his newly launched cable network. Using the technology of his media group, he unleashes a conflict in South China Seas between two Chinese planes and a British ship. The skirmish threatens to blow up into a large-scale war between China and Britain, but for 007 who infiltrates the media house as a businessman and teams up with Chinese super agent, Wai Lin (Michelle Yeoh), to kick ass and curb mayhem. The duo has 48 hours to stop World War III and prevent the media baron from making headlines. Time enough to take you on a merry ride across continents in a BMW, with a suave super agent and a sassy Bond girl.

## ▶ THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH

ACTION | 1999 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
MICHAEL APTED
CAST:
PIERCE BROSNAN, SOPHIE MARCEAU, DENISE RICHARDS

Set in the 19th century – thankfully, for machines and special effects do not outnumber humans – 007 must ward off the evil intentions of international terrorist Renard (Robert Carlyle) who is hell-bent on living out his megalomaniac fantasies, which include the abduction of beautiful Elektra (Sophie Marceau), and gain control of the King's oil pipelines. However, the plot is peripheral in *The World Is Not Enough*. The gizmo and geek are more important. And Director Michael Apted has generously peppered the film with it all: a powerboat chase on Thames, a hot-air balloon race, hang-gliding, BMW bash ups, submarine warfare ... Enough to set the adrenalin pumping, which may already be reaching dangerous levels with the overdose of cheesecake. For this time, the bad girl and the good gal are both shaken and stirred. Marceau with her slinky costumes,

sultry boudoir scenes and stunning ski sequences sets the pulse racing, even as Christmas Jones (Denise Richards), a nuclear scientist, in hot pants has Bond eating out of her hand. Unadulterated entertainment.

## ▶ DIE ANOTHER DAY

ACTION | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
LEE TAMAHORI
**CAST:**
PIERCE BROSNAN, HALLE BERRY, TOBY STEPHENS, ROSAMUND PIKE

In *Die Another Day*, it's the North Koreans who take over from where the Russians left as traditional baddies. Bond (Pierce Brosnan) has been imprisoned for 14 months by the cold-hearted North Koreans and is freed in an exchange of prisoners. Thirsting for revenge, he sets out on his mission by chasing the evil Zao (Rick Yune) and ends up in Iceland in the ice palace of eccentric billionaire Gustav Graves (Toby Stephens) who dreams of world domination by building a giant space-based weapon. His comrade-in-arms is the spunky Halle Berry who adds a tang to the archetypal Bond girl, even as she pays tribute to Ursula Andress, the first Bond girl in *Dr. No*. Crucially, *Die Another Day* was Pierce Brosnan's last Bond venture.

## ▶ CASINO ROYALE

ACTION | 2006 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN CAMPBELL
**CAST:**
DANIEL CRAIG, EVA GREEN, MADS MIKKELSON, JUDI DENCH

His name is Bond. Craggy Bond! Brit critics insist that Daniel Craig is the Best Bond after Sean Connery. Our take? He's a no-chinks-in-my-armour Bond, a hard-balled player who can take hits without flinching. Bottom line? Craig's gritty and good, but Connery remains the best. In *Casino Royale*, Craig, as the new 007, has the arduous task of putting an end to global terrorism. He plans to choke off funds of terrorists by winning the blood money in a do-or-die game of poker. His opponent, Le Chiffre (Mads Mikkelson), is the international banker to global terrorists. Aiding Bond in his mission is the arrogant, uptight treasury agent, Vesper Lynd (Eva Green), who has been sent to manage finances in this high-stakes operation. But there's more to the insouciant female agent, for Bond finds true love on his very first mission and is even willing to resign. But Mr. Bond, who'll save the world if you settle down to mow the lawn or prune rose bushes? So, there's heartbreak and cynicism that have become the hallmark of Bond movies ... All guts and grit, *Casino Royale* revitalizes the franchise that had begun to lose steam in a world of X-Men and Neophytes (*The Matrix* super tribe).

## ▶ BATMAN

ACTION | 1989 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
TIM BURTON

The high point of this version of *Batman* is its emphasis on high-octane action and no-holds barred confrontation between good (Batman) and evil (Joker). There is no moody introspection on

**CAST:**
MICHAEL KEATON, JACK NICHOLSON
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

the origin of the caped crusader, no dilemma about his identity. There is an allusion to his parent's death but, by and large, millionaire Bruce Wayne (Michael Keaton) is comfortable donning the rubber suit of Batman, slipping into his Batmobile and playing super-vigilante in crime-infested Gotham City. And if he has a delectable girlfriend (Kim Basinger) to brighten his days, he spends his nights chasing the devilish Joker, a fiendish Jack Nicholson, who plays Jack Napier, the henchman who became the boss after an accidental fall into a drum full of chemicals created a physical and mental imbalance in him. Michael Keaton's restrained portrayal of the winged wonder complements Nicholson's melodramatic rendition of the Joker, which has gone down in the annals of Hollywood as one of the most charismatic faces of evil. Pure fun and games, this version of *Batman* is ageless.

## ▶ BATMAN RETURNS

ACTION | 1992 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
TIM BURTON
**CAST:**
MICHAEL KEATON, DANNY DEVITO, MICHELLE PFEIFFER, CHRISTOPHER WALKEN

It's a cold Christmas Eve. A newly born baby is abandoned by his parents in the sewers of Gotham City simply because he is deformed. He is saved by a bunch of penguins and grows up into Penguin (Danny DeVito), an angry, vengeful man, who grows up watching humans from a distance. But he's not the only criminal that our caped crusader must tame in *Batman Returns*, a dark and brooding sequel. There's also greedy tycoon Max Shreck (Christopher Walken) who wants to rob Gotham City of its power. Not to forget Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer), the feline fury, who draws blood with a bite and has scores to settle. But it doesn't take long for Batman to make this kitten purr, but the rest of the business takes some flying and fighting before order is restored in Gotham City. Though the pace is leisurely and colours grim, *Batman Returns* still clicks.

## ▶ BATMAN FOREVER

ACTION | 1995 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOEL SCHUMACHER
**CAST:**
VAL KILMER, TOMMY LEE JONES, JIM CARREY, NICOLE KIDMAN

Batman (Val Kilmer) finds Robin (Chris O'Donnell), an orphaned circus acrobat, and brings him to live with him at Wayne Manor. But Robin is restless, rebellious and desperate to play hero. He gets his chance when Batman meets two villains in this sequel: Harvey Two-Face (Tommy Lee Jones), a former district attorney who has been the victim of an acid attack, and The Riddler (Jim Carrey), a weirdo who wants to steal other people's IQ to enlarge his own. But Robin isn't Batman's only aide; he's also got Dr. Chase Meridian (Nicole Kidman), the svelte psychologist, but only when she's not fantasizing about the man in the rubber suit. Despite its heavy star cast, *Batman Forever* doesn't really fly.

## ▶ BATMAN AND ROBIN

ACTION | 1997 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
JOEL SCHUMACHER
CAST:
GEORGE CLOONEY, ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, UMA THURMAN, CHRIS O' DONNELL, ALICIA SILVERSTONE

The Iceman cometh! With these memorable lines, Arnold Schwarzenegger steps into the hallowed portals of the Batman's big bad rivals. A pantheon made famous by the likes of the Joker, Penguin, Riddler and Two-Face. And Arnie ain't alone in his evil game plan, he has got Poison Ivy (Uma Thurman) for company. Only, their motives are different. While Mr. Freeze wants to freeze the world to bring back his cryogenically frozen wife back to life, the delectable Ms. Ivy wants to free the world of all animals and make space for her kinda greens. Vile hopes that end up in vain because Batman's out there with his new fangled Batmobile and his *bachchas* in black: Batboy (Chris O'Donnell) and Batgirl (Alicia Silverstone). With George Clooney playing Batman, there could have been fireworks. Ironically, *Batman And Robin* is a tame affair.

## ▶ BATMAN BEGINS

ACTION | 2005 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
CAST:
CHRISTIAN BALE, KATIE HOLMES

Comic book heroes took a giant leap forward with *Batman Begins*. They grew from powerful fighters to introspective individuals who realized that fighting for justice wasn't merely about flexing their muscles. Billionaire Bruce Wayne is troubled, angst-ridden and so embarks on a journey of self-discovery to battle his fears. Having witnessed his parents' violent death, he joins a league of fighters headed by Ken Watanbe and enigmatic Liam Neeson who tells him, "You must grow into an idea." Wayne returns to Gotham City and begins to flesh out the idea of Batman, a caped crusader who aims to eradicate evil from society. Enter Batmobile and all the flashy paraphernalia that have made Batman Inc. an extremely impressive franchise. Christopher Nolan's film, which does not merely rely on its special effects, is the best among the *Batman* series for its intellectual underpinning and narrative structure.

## THE DARK KNIGHT

DRAMA | 2008 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
CAST:
CHRISTIAN BALE, HEATH LEDGER, AARON ECKHART, MAGGIE GYLLENHAAL
AWARD: 2 OSCARS INCLUDING BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (HEATH LEDGER).

Batman may be the Dark Knight, but the Shining Knight who steals the show is the manic, irrepressible Joker. Heath Ledger pitches in a rare performance as Joker, Batman's arch-rival. Ledger's Joker is even more hypnotic than Nicholson's Joker in Batman (1989). Indeed, Christopher Nolan deserves high praise for bridging the gap between pop art and pure art. Initially, our super-hero is in an introspective mood, unsure about his role in vice-ridden Gotham City that, he feels, needs a hero with a face, rather than a mysterious, masked man in a rubber suit. Gotham seems to find such a hero in district attorney Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart) who has put most criminals behind bars. Except the Joker, the painted-faced evil incarnate, who proclaims

himself as an agent of chaos and likes to carve smiles on people's faces after asking, "Why so serious?" The Joker's mission to corrupt the city's soul seems accomplished when hero Harvey metamorphoses into Harvey Two-Face, a disfigured figure who feels it's futile being decent in an indecent world. But hey, there's Batman, remember? Although one almost tends to forget him because of the heady spell the Joker casts each time he swaggers onto screen with his devilish act and quotable quotes. This, though the Batmobile and Batman's antics still work their magic. But finally, the Joker hits the nail on the head when he gatecrashes into a party and grandly declares, "Ladies and Gentlemen, we are the entertainers for the night." Super!!

## ▶ SPIDER-MAN

ACTION | 2002 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
SAM RAIMI
CAST:
TOBEY MAGUIRE, KIRSTEN DUNST, WILLEM DAFOE

A nerdy, loner, high school youth is bitten on a school trip by a genetically modified spider and gets transformed into Spider-Man, a masked crusader, who can swing across the cityscape and settle scores with baddies. The Marvel Comics character comes to life in this computer-generated marvel, with Tobey Maguire dexterously slipping into Spidey's suit, even as he excels in his pulverized alter ego, Peter Parker. In *Spider-Man*, Spidey meets his match in the Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), a billionaire scientist, who covets the US military project of genetically enhanced soldiers. He transforms himself into one, even before the government gives him the green signal. The CGI sequences are memorable, but more than the flying and crawling, Spidey's first upside-down kiss with journalist Mary Jane Watson (Kirsten Dunst) sticks to the memory.

## ▶ SPIDER-MAN 2

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
SAM RAIMI
CAST:
TOBEY MAGUIRE, KIRSTEN DUNST, ALFRED MOLINA

In this sequel, *Spider-Man 2*, Spidey is a post 9/11 hero rather than an old-fashioned hero. He is losing his power. He falls from high-rises and ends up trashing his spider suit. For life has only gotten worse for Peter Parker. He is fired from his job, threatened by his slumlord, lives in a creepy apartment and is discarded by his sweetheart, Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst), for a dashing astronaut. And if that's not enough, he washes his

**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST VISUAL EFFECTS.

Spiderman suit and the colour runs. In despair, our reluctant hero turns his back to the Spidey act. But the world needs a hero. Specially when a scientist turns into a megalomaniac (Alfred Molina) and wants to rule the world with his four mechanical tentacles. Yup, Doc Ock transforms Peter Parker into Spider-Man again in this coming-of-age film where our hero realizes you gotta give up the simple pleasures of life for the greater good.

## ▶ SPIDER-MAN 3

ACTION | 2007 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
SAM RAIMI
**CAST:**
TOBEY MAGUIRE, KIRSTEN DUNST, JAMES FRANCO

Three villains, a doubting girlfriend, an irresistible seductress and some evil alien goop: Spider-Man has too many troubles to let him free fly and free fall in this prolonged (139 minutes), pricey *Spider-Man 3*. Reportedly the most expensive film of the trilogy, does *Spider-Man 3* give you more bang for bigger bucks? Spidey's hardly the Superhero he used to be. And he's even confessed that he can't battle all the bad guys alone. Will one of the bad guys (old friend Harry, now the Green Goblin) turn good and help Spidey save the world? And the Green Goblin ends up being more endearing than the webbed wonder, with more people – including Spidey and Mary Jane – shedding tears on his save-Spidey mission. Again, while his tryst with his evil side gives him a swagger as he jives down the mean NY streets, it robs him of all the goodness that is a quintessential part of all Superheroes. So what's right with *Spider-Man 3*? Simple. It's still larger-than-life when the action cuts begin. The CGI stuff is nail biting even now. Sandman, Spidey's new enemy, is awesome, with his post-particle physics body that alternates between a sandstorm and a human form with perfect ease. *The King Kong* kinda climax is blockbuster stuff. And Spidey still sends a thrill down your spine as he dizzily bungee jumps across the Manhattan skyline.

## ▶ SUPERMAN

ACTION | 1978 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
RICHARD DONNER
**CAST:**
CHRISTOPHER REEVES, MARLON BRANDO, GENE HACKMAN, MARGOT KIDDER

One of the best celluloid adaptations of a comic book, *Superman* soars due to the authentic feel that Christopher Reeves gives to the central character. He fits perfectly into the role of the fabled orphan from Planet Krypton. He travels through time and space to save Planet Earth from power-hungry megalomaniac Lex Luthor (Gene Hackman). In *Superman*, low-key reporter Clark Kent metamorphoses into the man of steel who flies across New York City, saving damsels – and the world—in distress. In the first adventure, Superman must destroy evil Luthor's plan to build a new West Coast, by stockpiling hijacked nuclear missiles. Irreversibly changing the appeal of the hero, *Superman* also changed the face of romance. After *Superman*, romance did not merely mean a prosaic date,

but involved some night gliding across starry space, this being Superman's normal tryst with spunky journo Lois Lane (Margot Kidder).

## ▶ SUPERMAN RETURNS

ACTION | 2006 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
BRYAN SINGER
CAST:
BRANDON ROUTH, KATE BOSWORTH, KEVIN SPACEY, JAMES MARSDEN

Fearless reporter Lois Lane (Kate Bosworth) believes the world has bypassed Superman and his club of super heroes. Lois Lane can be forgiven 'coz she's heartbroken. Her caped crusader has simply flown off into the heavens and left her with the second best: nice guy Richard (James Marsden). And the world needs Superman. More important, Superman will always be needed as long as there are Superdevils: megalomaniacs who want to build new worlds and rule over technology. *Superman Returns* has an over-the-edge Lex Luthor (Kevin Spacey) who wants to build a new continent in mid-Atlantic. The sub-text? Billions of people would die and America would be washed away as the real-estate peddler amasses his fortunes. Time for Superman to fly down from his sojourns to Krypton and lock horns with arch rival Lex Luthor. But before that, he must save his long lost love in a breathtaking sequence that sees him safely land a NASA plane that was taking a bunch of journos into outer space. It's in these sequences when bespectacled reporter Clark Kent sheds his ordinariness for super strength that *Superman Returns* simply lights up. Otherwise, the film's tone is largely glum and the mood solemn. Only the action is edge-of-the-seat.

## ▶ MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

ACTION | 1996 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BRIAN DE PALMA
CAST:
TOM CRUISE, JON VOIGHT, EMMANUELLE BEART

*Mission: Impossible* was the celluloid rendition of the popular television series of the 1960s, featuring a Bond-like hero who was on a Bond-like mission to save the world from sundry enemies. Agent Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) is the action hero for Jim Phelps (Jon Voight) Impossible Missions Force and is thrown into the battlefield whenever the threat — to world peace, rule of law, civilized society — grew too big to handle. This time, he must save the NOC list — an account of all the super secret agents working for the US — from falling into the hands of an international arms dealer (Vanessa Redgrave). Sprinkled generously with mind-boggling action sequences, the first film in a trilogy worked like an edge of the seat thriller and catapulted Tom Cruise to the status of a debonair action hero.

## ▶ MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 2

ACTION | 2000 | ★★★½

You can't have enough of the chills and thrills of the M:i series. In *Mission: Impossible 2*, the heroic exploits of special agent Ethan Hunt are mind-boggling as he sets out to save the world from

DIRECTION:
JOHN WOO
CAST:
TOM CRUISE, DOUGRAY SCOTT, THANDIE NEWTON

the dreaded "Chimera" virus and battles the business tycoon who dreams of world power. And the fact that he has a glamorous aide – the beautiful Miss Thandie Newton – to pep up his exploits adds to the *mirch masala*. But romance is just an interlude. For action is always king in a John Woo film. An absolute wizard in action scenes, he makes an art out of violence. If the film opens with salsa on the cliffs, followed by edge-of-the-seat explosions, the climax revs up with a plethora of thrills. First, there is the motorbike chase that is a marvel of speed, sound and motion. And then, the hand-to-hand combat sequences between Cruise and Dougray Scott: milestones in AXN stuff. High on action, motion and adventure though low on story, M:i-2 falls into place with the rest in Woo's oeuvre – *Broken Arrow, Face\Off* – and leaves viewers awe-struck and riveted.

## ▶ MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III

ACTION | 2006 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
J.J. ABRAMS
CAST:
TOM CRUISE, PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN, MICHELLE MONAGHAN

In *Mission: Impossible III*, Agent Ethan Hunt is back. But neither as bold nor as brash as before. However, the action is high decibel yet credible, whether in Vatican City where the M:I gang blows up a new Lamborghini or in the towering buildings of Shanghai where Agent Hunt hops, skips and jumps in a bid to save his wife from the double-dyed villain (Philip Seymour Hoffman). The USP of the M:I franchise has always been the incredible action sequences. But *Mission: Impossible III* seems tame in comparison. In the film, Ethan Hunt comes out of semi-retirement to rescue IMF agent Keri Russell who has been captured while investigating the dubious deals of arms dealer Philip Seymour Hoffman. Tom Cruise plays a more laid-back Hunt who wants to settle down now that he has found a sweet nurse (Michelle Monaghan) who doesn't know anything about his job. But his engagement party is disrupted by a phone call that sends him off on a cross-continent chase in search of bad guy Owen Davian (Philip Seymour Hoffman). Okay for action buffs.

## ▶ DIE HARD

ACTION | 1988 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN MCTIERNAN
CAST:
BRUCE WILLIS, ALAN RICKMAN

In *Die Hard*, Bruce Willis reinvents the traditional Hollywood cop drama in his bravura portrayal of NYPD detective John McLane. He comes to Los Angeles on family work and ends up spending Christmas with a bunch of terrorists. All that McLane wants is to patch up with his estranged wife. He goes to meet her in her swanky new office that is soon transformed into a battleground. Terrorists hold the inmates hostage and threaten to blow up the building, but they have not reckoned with the tough cop in a singlet. *Die Hard* is a gritty thriller with loads of violent action where Bruce Willis opts for guts than gadgets. The fact that his adversary is the enigmatic Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman), a suave

and sartorially advanced German terrorist, adds to the thrill of this edgy cat and mouse game.

## ▶ DIE HARD 2: DIE HARDER

ACTION | 1990 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
RENNY HARLIN
CAST:
BRUCE WILLIS, BONNIE BEDELIA, WILLIAM SADLER

John McLane (Bruce Willis) is back, battling terrorists and saving his beleaguered wife, Holly (Bonnie Bedelia). This time, the action shifts from Nakatomi Towers in LA to Dulles Airport, Washington DC. It's Christmas time, there's a blizzard on its way, even as Holly's plane is forced to circle the sky since a band of terrorists has taken over the airport. Led by renegade Colonel Stewart (William Sadler), they demand the release of an arrested drug lord on his way to the US for trial. John McLane, the hard-balled cop, packs in a few new punches in this gritty thriller that sees him dodging bullets, planes, the anti-terrorist squad and terrorist themselves. Sorely missed is the grandeur of bad man Alan Rickman who added pizzazz to *Die Hard*.

## ▶ DIE HARD WITH A VENGEANCE

ACTION | 1995 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN MCTIERNAN
CAST:
BRUCE WILLIS, JEREMY IRONS, SAMUEL L JACKSON

John McLane, the brave cop, is bogged down by his woes. For wife Holly has moved to the West Coast and, of late, he's been hitting the bottle. But these terrorists never really let him call it a day. This time, John McLane must stop the consummate bomber Simon (Jeremy Irons) from blowing up buildings and schools with push-button ease. In *Die Hard With A Vengeance*, he has the friendly Zeus (Samuel L. Jackson), a Harlem shop owner, as his ally as he combs 1,400 schools in New York to find a deadly bomb. Action is high-octane but the story is lacklustre.

## ▶ LIVE FREE OR DIE HARD

ACTION | 2007 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
LEN WISEMAN
CAST:
BRUCE WILLIS, TIMOTHY OLYPHANT, MAGGIE Q

A gap of 12 years doesn't seem to have taken a toll on Hollywood's most *avant garde* cop, Johnny McLane (Bruce Willis). He's still the best bet against weirdoes, psychopaths and terrorists. So what if he hasn't kept pace with the technological blitzkrieg? And so what if New Age terrorism has taken the form of a virtual war – they call it virtual terrorism – that threatens the world? McLane still has the never-say-die guts when the world begins to crumble. In *Live Free Or Die Hard*, it's literally so, for even as TV screens light up, with stunning visuals of White House, doing a WTC, America readies for a more virulent 9/11 where everything comes to a standstill. The FBI is clueless as techno-geek Thomas Gabriel (Timothy Olyphant) wreaks revenge on a nation that had laughed off his concerns of virtual terrorism as the Next Big Threat. Now, it's left to our gloomy cop to save the world. And all he's got is a young hacker (Justin Long) to help him through the befuddling binary world. But

that's only up to a point. When it's crunch time, the sole thing that works is Bruce's biceps as he kicks butt with delectable Maggie Q (an exquisitely choreographed fight) or 'kills' a helicopter with a car because he falls short of bullets. And if that's not enough, he brings down an F16 with bare hands! After all this, anyone for Batman, Superman or Spiderman?

## ▶ X-MEN

SCI-FI | 2000 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BRYAN SINGER
CAST:
HUGH JACKMAN, IAN MCKELLEN, FAMKE JANSSEN, PATRICK STEWART

In *X-Men*, a mutant Magneto (Ian McKellen) had survived the Nazi camps as a boy in Poland. Now, when the US government passes a diktat calling all mutants (humans with special powers) to register themselves, Magneto is filled with nightmares of the past. Is it the beginning of another age of intolerance, where humans would exploit and abuse mutants? Before his nightmare can become true, Magneto leads a resistance of mutantkind against humankind. And the only creatures who can stop him are X-Men, a band of human-friendly mutants, who believe in peaceful co-existence. Led by telepathic Professor X (Patrick Stewart), the trio of messianic mutants – Cyclops, Storm, Dr. Jean Grey – are joined by maverick Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) in the crusade against rogue mutants. Marvel Comics first foray into filmdom is peppered with great visuals and comic-book exuberance.

## ▶ X-MEN 2

SCI-FI | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BRYAN SINGER
CAST:
HUGH JACKMAN, HALLE BERRY, PATRICK STEWART, IAN MCKELLEN

Like all sci-fi films, *X-Men 2* fascinates by its special effects. The storyline is inconsequential and can be summed up in two lines: two gangs of mutants fight for control and the US President (a Bush clone) falls in the line of fire. So, you have the patriotic mutants and terrorist mutants and no prizes for guessing who wins the war against terror. Watch the film for its 'gawk quotient' which is quite high with Mystique changing form; Wolverine battling bad guys; Storm raising a storm; Jean propelling supersonic jets with a mere look; Nighcrawler infiltrating White House and Magneto lording over them all with his demonic grin.

## ▶ X-MEN: THE LAST STAND

SCI-FI | 2006 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
BRETT RATNER
CAST:
HUGH JACKMAN, HALLE BERRY, IAN MCKELLEN, FAMKE JANSSEN

In *X-Men: The Last Stand*, the Marvel men are back. And this time, it's a do-or-die battle to save their species. For Homo sapiens, who view all forms of mutation as an illness, have found a cure that would deprive mutants of their super-special skills. And the cure – a monk-like boy – is hidden in high-security Alcatraz that becomes the centre of a stormy battle between good and bad mutants. The bad mutants, led by renegade

Magneto (Ian McKellen) and the rebels, raise a war cry against Homo sapiens and set out to steal the cure. The good mutants, led by old faithful Wolverine (Hugh Jackson) and elemental Storm (Halle Berry), believe that the world can only survive if there is harmony between man and mutants. Their objective: save the cure, it might come in handy. But the balance seems to be tilted in favour of the goons, especially since they have the powerful Dark Phoenix (Famke Janssen) on their side. Load of sound, light and fury, plus the usual special effects characteristic of the *X-Men* series.

## ▶ SHREK

COMEDY | 2001 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
Andrew Adamson
**CAST:**
Voice of Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, John Lithgow
**AWARD:**
Oscar for Best Animated Feature.

Shrek's a shriek, not just a scream. He is the most beautiful Ogre that ever walked across the silver screen. Why? Because he has a heart of gold and has been slickly packaged. Living in a swamp, he wants to build a huge wall around his home. But before that, he must ward off the various squatters: Three Blind Mice, Red Riding Hood's Wolf, Seven Dwarfs, Robin Hood and many others displaced by the rapacious Lord Farquaad. The only way Shrek can save his land is to accept Lord Farquaad's proposal. He must save Princess Fiona from the fearsome dragon and bring her to Farquaad. Easier said than done. For Ogres have hearts. And friends who can double up as philosophers and guides despite being a donkey. Here, we are talking about the smartest ass (Eddie Murphy) in tinsel town. He not only rewrites the archetypal fairy tale but also achieves the impossible. In *Shrek*, he tames the fire-spewing dragon and transforms her into a mushy she-dragon in love. As for Princess Fiona, she's a new-millennium girl who can kick ass and also croon for her Prince Charming. End result? Loads of fun and a new end to tired and tested fairy tales: "And they lived Ugly (and happy) ever after." Amen!

## ▶ SHREK 2

ANIMATION | 2004 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
Andrew Adamson, Kelly Asbury
**CAST:**
Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz

So Shrek has slain the dragon and freed the Princess with a kiss. But the kiss that is supposed to come from Prince Charming (Rupert Everett) came from an Ogre instead. End result? The petite princess Fiona (Cameron Diaz) is now a tall green Ogre too. Doesn't really matter since the two are in love and the lonely Ogre is now domesticated and married. But will Fiona's parents accept their unconventional son-in-law with his uncouth ways? Have fun as King Harold (John Cleese) and Queen Lillian (Julie Andrews) overcome their culture shock and get used to Mr. and Mrs. Ogre. The drama in *Shrek 2* is largely in the introduction of a new character, Puss in Boots (Antonio Banderas), a hit man who has been hired by the King to get Shrek out of the way and give his daughter to the Prince. But

Puss switches sides and wants Shrek's romance to end happily ever after. Banderas' Puss, with the Spanish accent, is amusingly animated and gets some of the biggest laughs.

## ▶ SHREK 3

ANIMATION | 2007 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
RAMAN HUI, CHRIS MILLER
CAST:
VOICE OF MIKE MYERS, CAMERON DIAZ, EDDIE MURPHY

The green Ogre is back in *Shrek 3*, but this time he's fidgety and nervous with his impending fatherhood and kingship of Far Far Away, the fairy tale kingdom of his father-in-law who dies after anointing him king. Shrek is ready for neither. But while he can't wish fatherhood away (Fiona would never forgive him), he can pass over the kingship to the next kin. So what if it happens to be high school 'loser' Artie (Justin Timberlake)? All it needs is a bit of convincing and loads of browbeating. Then, Shrek has his best buddies, Donkey (Eddie Murphy) and Puss in Boots (Antonio Banderas), to help him in the arduous mission. The animation is state-of-the-art. The characters are funky, specially the female fairy tale brigade (Snow White, Rapunzel and the rest) who appear as disgruntled, bored and bitchy bimbettes.

## ▶ ROCKY

ACTION | 1976 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOHN AVILDSEN
CAST:
SYLVESTER STALLONE, TALIA SHIRE
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

The current heavyweight champion, Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers), wants to fight an underdog to create boxing news. It's time for Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone), a small-time boxer, to rise from the dust and punch his way to boxing glory. Balboa's nerve-wracking training regime on the streets of Philadelphia, his metamorphosis into a lean, mean fighting machine, his tenderness towards shy Ms. Shire and his hard-hitting knockout punches make for a sizzling movie. *Rocky* ended up creating an award-winning franchise that has already seen a blitzkrieg of five feisty films.

## ▶ ROCKY II

ACTION | 1979 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
SYLVESTER STALLONE
CAST:
SYLVESTER STALLONE, CARL WEATHERS, TALIA SHIRE

Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone) is in semi-retirement, hunting around for alternative jobs to maintain his upper crust existence with his wife, Adrian (Talia Shire), who is pregnant. His opponent Apollo Creed has still not forgotten his humiliation and is hungry for revenge. He challenges him to another fight and, after some initial reluctance, our hero ends up in the ring again. But before that, he must take care of his wife and find time to train in scrapyards and deserted streets for the final knockout. The sequel works, pitching Balboa as the classic underdog who must win, at all costs.

## ▶ ROCKY III

ACTION | 1982 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
SYLVESTER STALLONE
CAST:
SYLVESTER STALLONE, TALIA SHIRE, MR. T, CARL WEATHERS

On the personal front, life may be a roller-coaster ride for Rocky (Sylvester Stallone), but professionally, it's not quite the best of times. Rocky gets a wake-up call when he suffers a terrible defeat at the hands of the vicious Clubber Lang (Mr. T). With his trainer, Mikey, having deserted him, things don't seem too good. But there's hope still, when Rocky's former opponent, Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers), becomes his buddy and trains him for the final confrontation where he not only regains his reputation, but also gives us one of his most visceral, gut-wrenching fights.

## ▶ ROCKY IV

ACTION | 1985 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
SYLVESTER STALLONE
CAST:
SYLVESTER STALLONE, TALIA SHIRE, DOLPH LUDREN, BRIGITTE NIELSON

It isn't just personal; in *Rocky IV*, Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone) must also fight for America. Of course, there is a personal motive too: he must avenge the death of his friend Apollo Creed who has been slaughtered in the ring by Drago, a Russian maniac, who belligerently declares, "I defeat all man!" Rocky comes out of his retirement to make Drago, the hulk, taste blood in his own country, Russia. Though the action cuts – specially the arduous training in the Siberian wilderness – are still intact, *Rocky IV* loses out a bit on the emotional quotient.

## ▶ ROCKY V

ACTION | 1990 | ★★½

DIRECTION:
JOHN D. AVILDSEN
CAST:
SYLVESTER STALLONE, TALIA SHIRE, TOMMY MORRISON

No big fights, no gruelling training schedules, the franchise seems to lose all its steam in *Rocky V* that has been directed by John D. Avildsen, who was at the helm of affairs in the first film, *Rocky*. Unfortunately, Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone) seems to have lost all his bluster and bite and is a shadow of himself, suffering from brain damage, and unable to fight. All he can do is to re-open his trainer Mickey's gym and train the new kid on the block (Tommy Morrison), while his wife takes up her old job in a pet shop. *Rocky V* is a sad denouement of a hero who is shorn off his punches.

## ▶ ROCKY BALBOA

ACTION | 2006 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
SYLVESTER STALLONE
CAST:
SYLVESTER STALLONE, BURT YOUNG, MILO VENTIMIGLIA, GERALDINE HUGHES

Old warhorses need never retire. Rocky Balboa returns after 16 years. And it's a wonderful and warm homecoming. For our prizefighter may have aged terribly, but his punch still packs power. More important, he is as heroic as before, despite the fact that he has been reduced to a has-been hero who relates old ringside stories to interested diners in his restaurant. And when he's not doing that, he's lamenting his dead wife and trying his best to connect with his yuppie son who feels embarrassed by his lumbering giant of a dad. But then Rocky is a hero. He's already knocked us with his power punches five times before. So aren't we waiting for one more KO? Specially when our ageing hero believes it's time to give his son the final lesson of his life: Take the punches, however hard they are, and hit back harder ... So it's back to the training room for one final fight with the current title holder, Mason "The Line" Dixon (Antonio Tarver), who may be younger but he isn't Rocky, remember! Stallone's still hot.

## ▶ THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

THRILLER | 1991 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JONATHAN DEMME
CAST:
ANTHONY HOPKINS, JODIE FOSTER
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR, BEST ACTRESS.

*The Silence Of The Lambs* is the sort of film that makes you believe in the impossible. It makes you believe that a cannibal could be a hero and a gentleman and could even win your admiration despite sending a chill down your spine. It isn't the inexperienced FBI cadet, Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster), who becomes morally ambivalent towards the notorious Dr. Hannibal Lector (Anthony Hopkins) as she seeks his help while trying to nab another psychopath. Anthony Hopkins' intense portrayal of the character transforms Hannibal the Cannibal into such a connoisseur-cum-intellectual that even the viewer gets swept away by his charisma. Gaze into the deep, dark recesses of Hannibal's twisted soul and find out what psychopaths are made of. Horror never remained the same after this film.

## ▶ HANNIBAL

THRILLER | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
RIDLEY SCOTT
CAST:
ANTHONY HOPKINS, JULIANNE MOORE

The cannibalism of *Hannibal*, a sequel to *The Silence Of The Lambs*, is no-holds-barred and loud. Agent Starling (Julianne Moore) is still wracked with nightmares of a psychopath who pounces on his victims, retreats with his mouth bloodied and with his victim writhing in faceless agony. But all that Hannibal talks about now is his plans to eat his acquaintance's wife and how he likes to carry his food on flights. The food is human anatomy, peppered and salted. But does he eat? Nah! For Hannibal is a changed man. After having fled into dignified anonymity, he works in a library and handles the march of civilization with a macabre grin. Also, he is in love with a woman

who is determined to be his nemesis. The evil this time is perpetrated by the faceless Mason Verger (Gary Oldman) who survived Hannibal's earlier exploits and now seeks revenge. The chill remains in *Hannibal* and the macabre still manages to rivet yet revolt. Hopkins again pitches in an exquisite performance that blends art with evil.

## ▶ HANNIBAL RISING

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
PETER WEBBER
CAST:
GASPARD ULLIEL, GONG LI, DOMINIC WEST

Writer Thomas Harris continues to delve into the psyche of Hannibal Lector who rewrote rules of cannibalism in *The Silence Of The Lambs*. In *Hannibal Rising*, Harris retraces Hannibal's tortured past to tell us why his favourite dishes are Fava Beans, Chianti and human cheeks. Blame it on the bad Nazis who not only gassed innocent people but also ate some of the kids. In 1944, at Lithuania, when Hannibal was just a boy, a bunch of starving thugs boiled his kid sister and ate her. Hannibal, who witnessed this horrific feast, ended up messed up for life. The only way to end his nightmares was to find his sister's killers and chew their cheeks off. So what if it means losing a woman he loved, a Japanese aunt (Gong Li), who sent him to medical school and tried to smoothen out his soul? *Hannibal Rising* may not be as riveting as *The Silence Of The Lambs* but, nonetheless, it is gritty fare. The French heartthrob, Gaspard Ulliel, effectively counters the flashy sophistication of Anthony Hopkins in the earlier films.

## ▶ RUSH HOUR

COMEDY | 1998 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BRETT RATNER
CAST:
JACKIE CHAN, CHRIS TUCKER

Motormouth Chris Tucker teams up with stunt joker Jackie Chan in *Rush Hour* to create some funny moments in this cops-and-robbers drama. The plot is never really important in a Jackie Chan film as the Hong Kong hero makes everything irrelevant with his panache for transforming the most death-defying action sequence into comedy. In *Rush Hour*, in terms of story, you have a one-liner: Inspector Lee (Jackie Chan) is sent to America to help rescue the daughter of the Chinese consul, being held hostage for a ransom of $50 million. He must work together with LAPD cop James Carter (Chris Tucker) who has been told to 'babysit' him in this new unfriendly terrain. Alas! Chan, the chopsocky champion, never needs babysitting, a bitter truth that the American cop soon learns. Good chemistry and a rib-tickling clash of culture make *Rush Hour* entertaining fare. Such is the film's popularity that it already has two sequels.

## ▶ RUSH HOUR 2

COMEDY | 2001 | ★★★½

Hong Kong Chief Inspector Lee (Jackie Chan) and LAPD Detective Carter (Chris Tucker) may seem to be the most

DIRECTION:
BRETT RATNER
CAST:
JACKIE CHAN, CHRIS TUCKER, JOHN LONE, ZHANG ZIYI

mismatched duo, but beneath the surface tension, they are in perfect symphony. After the success of their first venture in *Rush Hour*, they end up making music (read, mayhem) again in a sequel, *Rush Hour 2*, that duplicates the magic formula: slick action coupled with super buffoonery. The drama shifts locales from Hong Kong, L.A. to Las Vegas, as Tucker and Lee try to nab the super slick baddie Ricky Tan, the head of the Chinese Triad, and his delectable assistant, Hu Li (Zhang Ziyi), who loves to kick butt and create a storm. She's quite a match for Chan's chopsocky and stands up to him, despite her frail shoulders. A fun watch.

## ▶ RUSH HOUR 3

COMEDY | 2007 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BRETT RATNER
CAST:
JACKIE CHAN, CHRIS TUCKER

The motormouth (Chris Tucker) and the hit machine (Jackie Chan) are back in *Rush Hour 3*. They may have nothing new to offer in their gag bag, yet the film retains its fun quotient as Chief Inspector Lee and Detective-turned-traffic cop Carter take on the Chinese Triad crime syndicate after a Chinese ambassador is murdered in Los Angeles. *Rush Hour 3* tickles you in places, specially when the French cabbie man (Yvan Attal), who assists the bumbling duo, longs to be an American by doing what Americans ostensibly do: killing people for no reason at all! The usual digs against Americans, blacks, Chinese and oversexed women make the third assignment of the Carter-Lee Inc. one more mad caper against crime in the city. This time, the city is Paris, and the playground for all the kick-butting and kung fu hustle is Eiffel Tower. Quirky Tucker humour and cheesy Chan chopsocky make for mirthful time pass.

## ▶ THE MATRIX

SCI-FI | 1999 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
LARRY AND ANDY WACHOWSKI
CAST:
KEANU REEVES, LAURENCE FISHBURNE, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

If a filmmaker can take complex hi-tech terms like Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence, make them cogent fare, and keep the technologically challenged viewer rapt, he has achieved a marvel. And with its innovative blend of philosophy, science and drama, *The Matrix* is that marvel. Not forgetting its amazing special effects that make an art out of action. The film dwells on the age-old conflict between the physical world that is narrow, limited, constricting and the expansive canvas of the mind, where there are no frontiers. Through its plot, it also throws up a topically tantalizing debate on the supremacy of man over machine. The plot focuses on the gallant attempts of a bunch of heroes to save Zion: the only human city left in a mechanized 2099. The legend of Neo (Keanu Reeves) and his attempt to save the human mind results in two other high-octane action sequels: *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions*.

## ▶ MATRIX RELOADED

SCI-FI | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
WACHOWSKI BROTHERS
CAST:
KEANU REEVES, LAURENCE FISHBURNE, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS

*Matrix Reloaded* scores on both levels: on the expanse and derring-do of its SFX theme and because of its philosophical view that explains why humans are the best. Being the only creations that cannot be controlled, humans have a decided edge over the rest. Neo's (Keanu Reeves) quest for finding out the purpose of his existence leads him to the Oracle as he tries to save his beloved Trinity and the last remnants of humanity in Zion. Visually engaging, *Matrix Reloaded* boasts of a classic fight sequence where Neo must combat multiple versions of Agent Smith.

## ▶ THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS

SCI-FI | 2003 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
WACHOWSKI BROTHERS
CAST:
KEANU REEVES, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS

Two nail-biting battle sequences and an Indian connection: these are three reasons why you must not miss *The Matrix Revolutions*, containing the final chapter, a teaser that pits illusion against reality. Reasons enough for all those Neo-wave addicts who have waited so long to find out the following: Neo *Kaun*? *Matrix Kya*? Does *The Matrix Revolutions* answer all these queries? Forget it. What's important is the philosophy behind the art of filmmaking, something which the *Matrix* series expound at length. Its action sequences and special effects, where the human body defies all laws of gravity, sound, speed and fatality, are matchless. In part three, the final battle between Neo and Agent Smith is another classic where 20 minutes of sheer power pounds across the screen. And when he's not fighting, Neo is busy taking his tutorials from representatives of the Oracle: an Indian family with an Indian heir to the omniscient Being. By promoting Sati as the Oracle's heir, the West acknowledges India's spiritual leadership. Between these, there are long, didactic explanations on the future, past and present. But all you need to know is whether the human race survives or not. It does.

## ▶ KILL BILL: VOLUME 1

ACTION | 2003 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
QUENTIN TARANTINO
CAST:
UMA THURMAN, LUCY LIU, DAVID CARRADINE

*Kill Bill: Volume 1* is more about the art of violence than violence per se. Who is a warrior and what is war: Tarantino uses a regular revenge tale to explore the ethics and art of mankind's favourite sport. The central character, simply called The Bride (Uma Thurman), is a modern-day samurai who rises from a long coma after being hit with a bullet in her head. She aims to take vengeance against her former lover and boss, Bill (David Carradine), who tried to kill her on her wedding day because she was marrying another guy. Her aim in doing so was to give her unborn child a normal life, shorn of violence. Once The Bride rises from the dead, she dons a yellow suit, equips herself with a bushido blade, draws up a list of her tormentors and sets

out to settle scores. A Daniel comes to justice! With excellently choreographed action sequences, pulsating with nervous energy, and with Thurman in great form, *Kill Bill* is truly Tarantino's best.

## ▶ KILL BILL: VOLUME 2

ACTION | 2004 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
QUENTIN TARANTINO
CAST:
UMA THURMAN, DAVID CARRADINE, DARYL HANNAH

The Bride is back. Once more, in a death-defying role where she survives gun shots, emerges from a coffin, escapes venomous black mambas and even dares to stand tall before the deadly Bill (David Carradine), the man who loves her yet wants her dead. *Kill Bill: Volume 2* pales a bit before the glimmer of *Kill Bill: Volume 1* for Quentin Tarantino sobers down his violence to give us a love story gone sour rather than a revenge flick. The Bride and Bill make a delightful couple here and you wish things would be right for them, if only The Bride didn't want to leave Bill's world when she discovered she was going to be a mother ... Uma Thurman's still in great form. Not only does she make all those impossible feats of physical valour credible, she also touches your heart with a display of her softer side.

## ▶ THE BOURNE IDENTITY

ACTION | 2002 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
DOUG LIMAN
CAST:
MATT DAMON, FRANKA POTENTE, CHRIS COOPER, CLIVE OWEN

Meet Jason Bourne, a CIA assassin, who loses his memory after a failed mission where he is shot twice and found floating on the ocean. Although he doesn't remember his identity, he can make out that someone out there wants him dead. But he doesn't know that it's his own boss (Chris Cooper) who wants to tie up this loose end before things boomerang. Bourne seeks refuge in Paris with German drifter Marie Kreutz (Franka Potente), but there really is no place to hide for this former hit man. Robert Ludlum fans ended up a trifle disappointed with this screen version of *The Bourne Identity*. However, Matt Damon more than made up with his perfect delineation of the cold-blooded, ruthless killer who is actually a hero.

## ▶ THE BOURNE SUPREMACY

THRILLER | 2004 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
PAUL GREENGRASS
CAST:
MATT DAMON, JOAN ALLEN, JULIA STILES

In *The Bourne Supremacy*, the sequel to *The Bourne Identity*, the secret agent is permanently on the run. From India – yup, he loses his girlfriend in Goa – to Berlin, Russia, New York, he tries to survive the deadly forces against him by using his awesome skills in spy craft, martial arts and running real fast. The movie works at one level because Matt Damon is perfectly suited to stay in the shadows. A low-key actor, with the boy-next-door face, Damon embodies the undercover agent without adding any flashy heroism. And who's chasing Bourne? Actually, it's a misguided US agent (Joan Allen) who believes he's the bad

guy, when the rotten apple is right next to her – another senior agent who switches loyalties for a bagful of greenbacks. Predictably, Bourne manages to clear his name, but not after a series of long chases and gritty shoot-outs. Julia Stiles is wasted in a two-bit role. Nevertheless, all you Ludlum fans, just see it.

## ▶ THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM

THRILLER | 2007 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
PAUL GREENGRASS
CAST:
MATT DAMON, JULIA STILES

Renegade agent Jason Bourne's saga gets grittier in *The Bourne Ultimatum*, the third film in the Bourne Trilogy. Not only is Bourne impossible to kill, even though the entire might of the American secret police is gunning for him, but he is also an unconventional hero, fighting them in their lair. This time, in his search for his real identity, the amnesiac Bourne lands in the heart of the CIA headquarters. He discovers that he, like other agents, has been ruthlessly transformed from a normal human being into a cold killing machine. But before he discovers the truth about his identity, he must wage a long-drawn battle which sees him doing a Daniel Craig: indulging in heart-stopping runs-for-life where he leaps across buildings, drives cars down high-rises, hits hard and fast with his fists and shows what it means for the fittest to survive. *The Bourne Ultimatum* is a relentless action stunner that doesn't let you sit back for a moment. Get your thrills.

## ▶ PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL

ADVENTURE | 2003 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
GORE VERBINSKI
CAST:
KEIRA KNIGHTLEY, ORLANDO BLOOM, JOHNNY DEPP

Great fun. See the *Black Pearl* stealing through the black night on the black ocean, ready to send its pirates on a midnight escapade before the looting begins. Watch Johnny Depp's histrionics as Captain John Sparrow, the swashbuckling pirate. Yes, there are Keira Knightley's lustrous locks too to affect the susceptible. An adventure in the old-fashioned fairy tale mode, *Pirates Of The Caribbean* is a love story set against the high seas where evil Captain Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush) kidnaps the governor's daughter to cure himself and his crew of the curse

that transforms them into skeletons every moonlit night. The daughter is saved by her Prince Charming (Orlando Bloom) who is a pirate too. But the film's real hero is Johnny Depp. His Captain Sparrow is the most charming rogue you've come across, ever since they stopped making those Wow Westerns.

## ▶ PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST

ADVENTURE | 2006 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
GORE VERBINSKI
CAST:
JOHNNY DEPP, KEIRA KNIGHTLEY, ORLANDO BLOOM
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR FOR VISUAL EFFECTS.

Debonair Johnny Depp is back as gentleman pirate Jack Sparrow who uses his grime and grimace to cover a heart of gold. Yet, unlike the first episode, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* is too long and exhausting. Moreover, it has too little of Jack Sparrow and too much of squid-like baddie Davy Jones (Bill Nighy) and his army of sea phantoms. The film takes off from the first episode. Captain Sparrow gets back the *Black Pearl* and his bizarre crew of scoundrels after escaping from an island of cannibals who are determined to have him for their annual barbecue. But before the *Pearl* can set sail, the Pirate must settle a blood debt he owes a long-forgotten enemy who is ostensibly indestructible. They have to find his heart that still beats in a hidden chest. But the hedonistic Sparrow finds two suckers who are willing to do anything for love – Keira and her fiancé, Orlando Bloom. Naturally, he forces them to help him tackle his enemy, little knowing that it's another heart he needs to be bothered about. And that's his own that seems to beat only for the delectable Ms. Knightley.

## ▶ PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END

ACTION | 2007 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
GORE VERBINSKI
CAST:
JOHNNY DEPP, KEIRA KNIGHTLEY, ORLANDO BLOOM

Thank God for Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp)! And thank God for his narcissism, optimism, strange attire, swagger and streak of wickedness. If it were not for his showmanship, this franchise would have been pronounced dead and buried in the third sequel. *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* takes off from Part 2 where Sparrow was held captive by the 'heartless' Davy Jones (Bill Nighy), despite sorceress Tia Delma's attempt to weave her magic spell. In Part 3, the spunky Ms Swann (Keira Knightley) joins her lover Will Turner (Orlando Bloom) and decrepit Captain Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush) to release John Sparrow from captivity. She aims to ensure that the foursome battle the enemies: the mercenary East India Company and inmates of the Flying Dutchman, Davy Jones' ghost ship. This time round, it's Keira who calls the shots as she is anointed 'King' of the pirates and leads them into battle against the mighty Armada, headed by old foe, Lord Beckett (Tom Hollander) and his ally, the infamous squid man, Davy Jones. He, in turn, just

gets to jump in and out of the film and lift it intermittently from its dull stupor with his witticisms and vain act.

## ▶ OCEAN'S ELEVEN

CRIME | 2001 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SODERBERGH
CAST:
GEORGE CLOONEY, BRAD PITT, ANDY GARCIA, MATT DAMON

Danny Ocean's gang of casino busters operate like a dream team. Not only are they adept at their work but they also team up perfectly to carry off the most improbable heists. And if that's not tantalizing enough, there's the ruthless, elegant Terry Benedict (Andy Garcia) who is awesome with his dapper, deadpan expression and killer instincts. As Las Vegas' biggest player (he owns the grandest casino), he makes a formidable enemy for the Eleven. Trying to rob him is no child's play. And robbing him requires a masterly touch. *Ocean's Eleven* has a racy pace and cutting-edge action. While the direction is superb, the acting is a class act. And despite the predominance of action and adventure, the interplay of emotions is riveting.

## ▶ OCEAN'S TWELVE

THRILLER | 2004 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SODERBERGH
CAST:
GEORGE CLOONEY, BRAD PITT, MATT DAMON, JULIA ROBERTS, CATHERINE ZETA-JONES, ANDY GARCIA, VINCENT CASSEL

In *Ocean's Twelve*, Danny Ocean (George Clooney) is in semi-retirement mode with wife Tess (Julia Roberts). But the gang is forced to assemble again and plan another high-stake's heist when gambler Terry Benedict (Andy Garcia) wants them to pay back the $160 million they'd stolen from him, in two week's time. There are welcome additions to the stylish gangster series in the form of the delectable Europol agent, Isabelle (Catherine Zeta-Jones), who shares some crackling chemistry with Rusty (Brad Pitt); Julia Roberts as Clooney's magnificent missus who measures up to the men; and Vincent Cassel as the Night Fox, a rival thief, who believes Ocean is all hype. Entertaining fare.

## ▶ OCEAN'S THIRTEEN

THRILLER | 2007 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SODERBERGH
CAST:
GEORGE CLOONEY, BRAD PITT, MATT DAMON, AL PACINO

The bad boys are back. This time, their master heist isn't executed for money at all. No, this time, they decide to steal millions again, but only for revenge. All the risk, high adventure and cross-border operation (they need to execute part of the plan in Mexico) are undertaken for the sake of their guru, Reuben (Elliot Gould), who has been double-crossed by his wily partner, Willie Banks (Al Pacino). The plan, like always, is ambitious and near-impossible. The gang decides to rob Banks of his entire wealth, once he builds the high-stakes casino on the land previously owned by Reuben. For this, they need to rig the machines, magnetize the dice, nullify the hi-tech security network and simulate an earthquake to bring down the Banks empire like a house of cards. Near-impossible? It couldn't be. Not for Danny Ocean (George Clooney) and his daredevils,

Rusty (Brad Pitt), Linus (Matt Damon) and the rest. What are missing are the girls – no Julia Roberts, no Catherine Zeta-Jones – apart from an underwritten role for Al Pacino.

## ▶ MEN IN BLACK

SCI-FI | 1997 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
Barry Sonnenfeld
**CAST:**
Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones
**AWARD:**
One Oscar.

The aliens have arrived. But unlike popular myth, most of them are friendly refugees who are using New York as their hideout from mean intergalactic creatures. In *Men In Black*, Agent Jay and Agent Kay (Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones) are friendly neighbourhood cops working for a special government agency that keeps tab on these otherworldly visitors. This time, they have to track down an unfriendly new visitor (Vincent D 'Onofrio) from outer space. An intergalactic assassin, he is on a mission to destroy and kill. Great special effects, rib-tickling comedy and inspired performances by Smith and Jones ensure a perfect entertainer.

## ▶ MEN IN BLACK 2

SCI-FI | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
Barry Sonnenfeld
**CAST:**
Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones, Lara Flyn Boyle, Rosario Dawson

In *Men In Black 2*, Agent Jay (Will Smith) and Agent Kay (Tommy Lee Jones) are back on the job, bashing up bad aliens and befriending good ones. But before they take up their new mission, Smith must de-neutralize his senior, Tommy Lee Jones, who has had a memory lapse and is leading a comfortable life as a postal worker. Together they must hunt down the evil extra-terrestrial Serleena (Lara Flyn Boyle) and pack her off from planet Earth before she wreaks havoc. The spoof on alien drama does have its moments of comedy. It has mind-boggling special effects but sorely lacks the punch of *Men In Black*.

## ▶ THE GODFATHER

DRAMA | 1972 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
Francis Ford Coppola
**CAST:**
Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, James Caan
**AWARDS:**
Seven Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Actor (Marlon Brando).

Based on Mario Puzo's best-selling book, *The Godfather* traces the transfer of power from the ageing patriarch of an Italian Mafioso family that heads the American crime syndicate, to his reluctant son who inherits the mantle, despite being embroiled in violent gang wars. *The Godfather* has gone down in Hollywood's history as one of the best crime sagas with some of the most memorable lines in its soundtrack. Don Corleone (Marlon Brando) may be a ruthless gangster but his violence does not detract from his being a benevolent family man. Yet, when rivals try to usurp his power, he is forced to appoint his youngest and brightest son, Michael Corleone (Al Pacino), to protect the Corleone family's fortunes. The singular shot of a once genteel Michael swivelling arrogantly on his father's chair, after settling all bloody scores, is the stuff of classic cult cinema.

## ▶ THE GODFATHER: PART II

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
Francis Ford Coppola
**CAST:**
Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, Diane Keaton
**AWARDS:**
Six Oscars, including Best Picture.

*The Godfather: Part II*, a sequel, contains a flashback into the journey of immigrant Vito Corleone through New York's violent underworld in the 1920s, before he became the undisputed mafia don. The film also documents his son Michael's attempts to expand the crime syndicate as its current head. Rarely do sequels live up to the original. *The Godfather: Part II* does, with powerhouse performances by Robert De Niro and Al Pacino as the two dons, Vito and Michael. While Vito's antecedents showcase the typical immigrant experience where crime becomes a means to ward off poverty, Michael's efforts to retain the undisputed supremacy of the Corleone family in the world of crime leaves him lonely at the top.

## ▶ THE GODFATHER: PART III

DRAMA | 1990 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
Francis Ford Coppola
**CAST:**
Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Andy Garcia

1979. New York. In *The Godfather: Part III*, Don Corleone's dream for son Michael seems to have come true. Michael has made the Corleone family legitimate and has carved a distinct niche for himself in society, now that he's been decorated with Order of St. Sebastian, the highest honour bestowed by the Catholic Church on a layman. More important, a greying Michael Corleone is truly a family man – like his father – who lives only for his daughter Mary (Sofia Coppola) and son Anthony (Frank D' Ambrosio). But the past subtly creeps up and crime has a way of never letting go. Only this time, the ageing Don wants to pass on the baton to the Corleone heir, Vincent Mancini (Andy Garcia), his brother Sonny's illegitimate son. It's a reversal of form, where Michael seems to have stepped into Don Corleone's shoes and the cold, ruthless Vincent is a copy of the young Michael. Gritty, not great, even though Michael still rocks.

## ▶ THE TERMINATOR

SCI-FI | 1984 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
James Cameron
**CAST:**
Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton

James Cameron's tryst with larger-than-life cinema, dominated by special effects, found fruition in this futuristic battle between humans and machines. *The Terminator* is set in a post-apocalyptic world where humans have become subservient to machines. A killer cyborg, christened the Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger), arrives from the distant future into a wasted and decrepit L.A. He has been sent on a mission: the machines want him to change the future by taking care of an unborn child who would lead a revolt against the mighty machines. A menacing killing machine-like Schwarzenegger spends most of the reel time hunting down Linda Hamilton, mother of the unborn child. But before he eliminates the hapless mother, he must tackle Michael Biehn, a survivor of the nuclear holocaust,

hell-bent on terminating the terminator. *The Terminator* has combat technology at its thrilling best.

## ▶ TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY

SCI-FI | 1991 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JAMES CAMERON
CAST:
ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, LINDA HAMILTON, ROBERT PATRICK
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

Single mother Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) may be in a mental institution, but she knows the end of the world is near and the rise of the mean machines will ensure Armageddon for the hapless human race. The only hope for survival lies with her young son, who has been separated from her and is living under foster care. But the machines have learnt the truth and are hell-bent on snuffing out the last human hope ... unless an old, battered, less evolved terminator robot, T-800 (Arnold Schwarzenegger), turns saviour and protects the mother and son from T-1000, the super-tech menacing marauder, made up of liquid metal. Awesome special effects, coupled with adrenalin-pumping confrontations between good machine versus bad machine, ensure edge-of-the-seat thrills.

## ▶ TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF MACHINES

ACTION | 2003 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
JONATHAN MOSTOW
CAST:
ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, KRISTANNA LOKEN

No confusion about this: *Terminator 2* is the best. In the third avatar, *Terminator 3: Rise of Machines*, Arnold Schwarzenegger looks too old and obsolete to pump up the adrenalin. Arnie's attempts to save the saviour of the human race seem jaded before the oomph of his opponent (Kristanna Loken), the hi-tech Termanatrix TX, who pouts and pummels her way through with metallic splendour. While the glint in her oxide eyes far outshines the dying red of Arnie's spluttering batteries, even his famous one-liners acknowledge the existence of a far superior being. Instead of "I'll be back," he stutters, "She'll be back." Tch-Tch! The story? The obsolete yet reliable T 101 is sent back to save the hope of the future, John Connors (Nick Stahl), who is on the run with his lieutenant Claire Daines. Together, they must not only save themselves from the deadly TX, but must also stave off a nuclear holocaust. Not to worry, the old warhorse still has a lot of spunk left.

## ▶ RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

ACTION | 1981 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
HARRISON FORD, KAREN ALLEN, PAUL FREEMAN
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

The fedora-wearing American archeologist, Indiana Jones, with his trigger-happy ways and nerves of steel, remains one of the most colourful adventurers of all times. He captured the adventure buff's imagination long before Captain Jack Sparrow (*Pirates Of The Caribbean*) sailed the high seas and Lara Croft slipped into the boots of the tomb raider. In his debut film, *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, Steven Spielberg's hero (Harrison Ford) is caught in a race against time to find the rare artefact, the Ark

of the Covenant (the golden casket where ancient Hebrews hid the Ten Commandments), before the infamous Nazis beat him in a death-defying mission. Death defying, did we say? Action never got more hectic as edge-of-the-seat SFX bombards the big screen with monstrous creepy-crawlies, incendiary bombs, booby-trapped tombs and desert chases. These, together with brawls in Nepal, bouts with drunken Sherpas and a former girlfriend in Tibet, make Indy the ultimate globe-trotting hero. Even today, The Indy Jones series remain one of celluloid's most eyeball popping pulp fiction stories.

## ▶ INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM ACTION | 1984 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:**
HARRISON FORD, CATE CAPSHAW, AMRISH PURI
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

In *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*, Indiana Jones lands in India and the adventure series seem to be divested of the fun element. That's because the director stocks it with clichés pertaining to the Orient that are ingrained in the Western mindset. There's black magic, child abuse, slavery, including a brutal sequence of a heart being ripped out. Indy escapes from Hong Kong to find himself in a small Indian village where he is persuaded by a bunch of villagers to find a missing magic stone. His journey leads him to a mysterious palace where rulers practise black magic in their quest for world domination. Catch Amrish Puri in full Oriental fury, even as the series lose a bit of its momentum.

## ▶ INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE ACTION | 1989 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:**
HARRISON FORD, SEAN CONNERY
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

In *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade*, Indy Jones sets out to search for his father, Professor Henry Jones (Sean Connery), who has disappeared after he embarked on a mission to find the Holy Grail. En route, he has to fight the Nazis who want the artefact and ends up meeting his love interest, Eisa Schneider (Alision Doody), since the feisty Marion (Karen Allen) is nowhere around in this sequel. But love takes a back seat as the father-son duo try to work out their prickly relationship and lay bare their love for each other. The film also boasts of a small flashback with River Phoenix playing the young Indy. Smart, sassy and action-packed, *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* scores in the chemistry between a crotchety Connery and a bristling Ford.

## ▶ INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL

ACTION | 2007 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
HARRISON FORD, CATE BLANCHETT, SHIA LABEOUF, KAREN ALLEY

In *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, Indy is back and E.T .is angry. What more could you fantasy guzzlers ask for! Let your imagination run riot as giant ants gobble up humans; young Shia LaBeouf lunges forth into a round of sword fencing with Catwoman Cate Blanchett, while being precariously balanced on two speeding jeeps; Harrison Ford leads his family through an ancient archeological maze, peopled with strange tribals; Karen Allen drives them down three never-ending rapids, without losing her hold on the steering wheel and the old lovers squabble in the midst of a bog, with a rat snake to rescue them. And if that's not nail-biting stuff, how about 13 E.T.s staying back on Earth, teaching man the marvels of technology? They build a fabled kingdom of gold, long, long ago ... and lose their cool, when someone steals one of their crystal skulls and curious Cate – a Russian agent – wants to steal their knowledge. It's a great comeback for the quintessential adventurer, Henry Jones Junior (Harrison Ford), who may be 65 years old, but is still not willing to relinquish his characteristic hat to Henry Jones Junior II. Indy fans will always remember *Raiders of the Lost Ark* as their favourite in this quartet and will find the fourth a trifle slow. It does take some time for the adventure to warm up as Indiana Jones tries to outwit the evil Russians, headed by a deliciously malevolent Cate Blanchett, in finding the missing kingdom of gold, founded by crystal-bodied aliens.

## ▶ JURASSIC PARK

SCI-FI | 1993 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
SAM NEILL, LAURA DERN, JEFF GOLDBLUM, RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS.

Don't play with nature, says Steven Spielberg in this super shocker that redefines the science of special effects. 'Larger-than-life' acquires a whole new meaning in *Jurassic Park* as T-Rex chomps and seems to thrust his jaws in your very face. It wants to make you creep through this hi-tech theme park where an eccentric millionaire (Richard Attenborough) brings to life his fantasies about a long-forgotten past by cloning dinosaurs. It could have been an idyllic opening for this prehistoric phantasmagoria, but for the security breach that has the hungry carnivores rushing into all the wrong places. They then feast on humans who were misguided enough to think they were masters of all creatures, big and small.

## ▶ JURASSIC PARK: THE LOST WORLD

THRILLER | 1997 | ★★★½

In *Jurassic Park: The Lost World*, Jeff Goldblum survives the dinosaurs to end up in another tryst with the carnivorous T-Rex,

DIRECTION:
STEVEN SPIELBERG
CAST:
JEFF GOLDBLUM, JULIANNE MOORE, RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH

as he accompanies his daughter and paleontologist girlfriend (Julianne Moore) to a distant park populated by genetically engineered extinct species. But someone (ageing billionaire Richard Hammond's greedy nephew) wants to bring back dinosaurs to San Diego to build a pre-historic zoo, while another person (Pete Postelthwaite) wants to capture T-Rex as game. The jaw-dropping dinos are back, but the fear quotient is somewhat diluted.

## ▶ JURASSIC PARK III

SCI-FI | 2001 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JOE JOHNSTON
CAST:
SAM NEILL, WILLIAM MACY, TEA LEONI

In *Jurassic Park III*, the prehistoric heroes are back. They are dangerous, armed (with raptor claws and raptor teeth) and pure predators. Dr. Alan Grant (Sam Neill), the original paleontologist (read Dino-man), returns to his obsession: tracking the Dino. Only this time, it is against his wishes. For Grant, like many scientists, believes that the laws of nature should not be tampered with. He is ill equipped to handle the living, breathing destroyers who have been genetically engineered and specially bred on a remote island in Costa Rica. So what if the mission is noble? Grant must help rescue a 12-year-old boy who has accidentally landed there after a paragliding mishap. And so what if he has been force-landed there by the distraught parents, masquerading as a kinky couple, in search of an exotic anniversary holiday? But the thrill of *Jurassic Park III* lies in its mighty raptors and marauding instincts. Tension runs high and undercurrents of terror never dim. Though the special effects aren't truly Spielbergian.

# 200 BEST OSCAR FILMS

## ▶ 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

SCI-FI | 1968 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STANLEY KUBRICK
**CAST:**
KEIR DULLEA, GARY LOCKWOOD,
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST SPECIAL EFFECTS.

*2001: A Space Odyssey* can be hailed as the bible of sci-fi cinema. Stanley Kubrick's film doesn't capture space as a mere backdrop for some high-octane drama, replete with explosions, collisions and laser flashes. Instead, he presents space as it truly is: a limitless expanse that is mysterious, unexplained and infinitely beyond the grasp of human intellect. The film begins in pre-historic times when ape men discover a huge black monolith shadowing their existence. As a consequence of this alien sighting, they arm themselves for the first time with weapons made out of animal bones. And as a weapon is flung into the expanse, the film shifts gears and enters the age of space travel. Civilization has dawned, but the menacing monolith is still there. This time, as a shadow under the lunar surface of the moon, sending strange signals to Jupiter. Two astronauts (Keir Dullea, Gary Lockwood) set out towards Jupiter in a spaceship controlled by Hal 9000, a computer that goes berserk midway. It's time for man to tame the machine, but not before Hal fights back for survival. Space has never looked scarier – or seemed more beautiful– on the big screen, not even when our filmmakers have peopled it with strange aliens.

## ▶ A BEAUTIFUL MIND

ROMANCE | 2001 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
RON HOWARD
**CAST:**
RUSSELL CROWE, JENNIFER CONNELLY
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

His first-grade teacher told him he was born with two-helpings of a brain and a half-helping of heart. But John Forbes Nash Jr. (Russell Crowe) does manage to live an amazing life where his mind and heart had an equal interplay. And the woman who imbues heart into his life is his student-turned-wife, Sylvia Nash (Jennifer Connelly), who stands by him through all the ups and downs in life. She helps him hang onto his sanity, despite bouts of schizophrenia and consequent alienation. Based on the biography of famous mathematician John Forbes Nash, written by his wife, Sylvia Nash, *A Beautiful Mind* is a warm and stirring testament of a bond that survives all odds.

## ▶ A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

DRAMA | 1966 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
FRED ZINNEMAN
**CAST:**
PAUL SCOFIELD, ROBERT SHAW, ORSON WELLES, WENDY MILLER
**AWARDS:**
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR AND BEST ACTOR (PAUL SCOFIELD).

A biopic on the confrontation between Henry VIII and Thomas More, *A Man For All Seasons* is a classic page from history. The king (Robert Shaw) wanted to divorce his wife and marry his mistress, Anne Boleyn (Vannesa Redgrave), but Thomas More (Paul Scofield) refused to sanction the divorce and earned the king's wrath. However, More was a principled man who could not be swayed even if the executioner's block awaited him. *A Man For All Seasons* is a stirring picture of Tudor turmoil, marked by a clash between the Roman Catholic Church and the royal throne.

## ▶ A PASSAGE TO INDIA

DRAMA | 1984 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
DAVID LEAN
**CAST:**
JUDY DAVIS, VICTOR BANERJEE, PEGGY ASHCROFT
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

Based on E.M. Forster's classic novel, *A Passage To India* matches up to David Lean's grand vision in films like *Lawrence Of Arabia* and *Doctor Zhivago*. Set against exotic locales and with a lush cinematography, *A Passage To India* captures the tensions unleashed by an unconventional friendship between a British woman, Miss Quested (Judy Davis), who visits India before her wedding and a genteel Indian, Dr. Aziz (Victor Banerjee), who falls prey to the Brit bias against natives. A classic document concerning the Raj, *A Passage To India* lays bare the cultural mistrust between the British and Indians.

## ▶ A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

DRAMA | 1951 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ELIA KAZAN
**CAST:**
MARLON BRANDO, VIVIEN LEIGH, KIM HUNTER
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (VIVIEN LEIGH).

A remarkable adaptation of Tennessee Williams' intensely moving play, Elia Kazan's film, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, created some unforgettable crackling screen chemistry between Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh. Having fallen upon bad days, a desperate Blanche DuBois (Vivien Leigh) escapes from her scandalous past and seeks temporary refuge with her sister Stella (Kim Hunter) and her brutish brother-in-law Stanley Kowalski (Marlon Brando). Stanley takes an instant dislike to his sister-in-law's fake upper-crust attitude that comes in direct conflict with his working-class morals and mores. And as the past threatens to creep into the claustrophobic apartment, the veneer of civility too begins to fade, with Stanley's overpowering sexuality getting a bit too troublesome for the ladylike Ms. DuBois. While Brando's sweaty T-shirt look is impossible to forget, it's Vivien Leigh's portrait of a desperate, lonely woman trying to survive in a cruel world, which hits you with its intensity.

## ▶ A TOUCH OF CLASS

COMEDY | 1974 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MELVIN FRANK
**CAST:**
GEORGE SEGAL, GLENDA JACKSON
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (GLENDA JACKSON).

Steve Blackburn (George Segal) is a habitual philanderer who loves to cheat on his wife. But this time he falls for a woman (Glenda Jackson) who isn't the archetypal mistress. A breezy sex comedy, *A Touch Of Class* lights up because of the relentless man-woman banter and the ebullient act by Glenda Jackson as the tantalizing 'other'.

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## ▶ THE ACCUSED

DRAMA | 1988 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JONATHAN KAPLAN
**CAST:**
JODIE FOSTER, KELLY MCGILLIS
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (JODIE FOSTER).

In the eyes of the world, Sarah Tobias (Jodie Foster) is a low-class bimbette, with flashy ways and a sexuality that she flippantly wears on her sleeve. She ends up being gang-raped on a pinball machine in a seedy bar one late night. Later, she loses her case in court and sees her rapists walk out scot-free since the jury feels she was asking for it. But Sarah fights back for justice with the help of her feisty lawyer (Kelly McGillis) and proves that a woman's dignity is inviolate, irrespective of her image or profession. With a gutsy performance by Jodie Foster, the film is a shot in the arm for women power.

## ▶ THE AFRICAN QUEEN

DRAMA | 1951 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN HUSTON
**CAST:**
HUMPHREY BOGART, KATHARINE HEPBURN
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (HUMPHREY BOGART).

Charlie (Humphrey Bogart) and Rose (Katharine Hepburn) form an odd couple. He's a gin-drinking, rakish pilot of a steamboat and she's a genteel spinster who keeps emotions at bay. The two come together on an impossible patriotic mission during World War I: they plan to steer the shabby steamboat, *The African Queen*, down uncharted waters and use it as a torpedo to destroy a German gunboat, *Empress Louisa*, that has been obstructing British counter-attacks. Set against the lush African landscape, the relationship between Charlie and Rose weathers many storms, almost like the doughty steamboat that combats dangerous swamps, waterfalls, rapids, rains, mechanical failures, blinding insect swarms and even a German offensive. It's vintage romance against an exotic backdrop. What more can you ask for!

## ▶ ALICE DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN SCORSESE
**CAST:**
ELLEN BURSTYN, KRIS KRISTOFFERSON, ALFRED LUTTER
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (ELLEN BURSTYN).

Alice (Ellen Burstyn) is your friendly neighbourhood woman, average in every way, except for the fact that she has been harbouring a dream to become a singer, like her idol Alice Faye, ever since she was a little girl. The dream gets buried as she is swept away by the banal business of life as a wife and mother. But it resurfaces again, when she becomes a widow at 35. She realizes that she is completely independent now, with no one to lay down rules for her. She organizes a garage sale, sells off her stuff and sets off on an odyssey to chase her childhood dream. With her is her precocious son. A feisty feminist document, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* has a stirring performance by Ellen Burstyn.

## ▶ ALIEN

SCI-FI | 1979 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
RIDLEY SCOTT
CAST:
SIGOURNEY WEAVER, TOM SKERRITT
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

In *Alien*, initially Ripley was a role written for a man. Instead, it went to Sigourney Weaver who not only added punch to it but also completely rewrote the alien versus woman equation. Earlier, the female cast was supposed to faint or get hysterical in the face of real or supernatural horror. But Ripley, with her muscular frame and steely nerves, shows how a woman could stand up to a cannibalistic face-hugging alien force that was hell-bent on destroying the crew of Nostromo, a space ship, that would have been on Earth if it hadn't intercepted a signal from an alien spaceship. The alien ship is full of a cargo of leathery eggs, the skeletal remains of the alien pilot, the unfriendly environs of deep, dark space, and the monstrous alien lunging out of the innards of a crewmember. You'd be petrified if the no-nonsense, ever-dependable Ripley wasn't around.

## ▶ ALL ABOUT EVE

DRAMA | 1950 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ
CAST:
BETTE DAVIS, ANNE BAXTER
AWARDS:
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

Fans can be dangerous and how! Eve Harrington (Anne Baxter), a scheming young fan, is not content with merely meeting her dream star, Margo Channing (Bette Davis). She wants to take over Channing's life too and become the star herself. And the fact that the legendary Broadway actress is ageing and fading only makes things easier for Eve. She first manages to enter the star's life as her helper, then as her understudy and finally as a Broadway biggie herself. *All About Eve* is a compelling woman versus woman duel, with Baxter and Davis lending dignity to the traditional vamp and heroine roles.

## ▶ ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

ACTION | 1930 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
LEWIS MILESTONE
CAST:
LOUIS WOLHEIM, LEW AYRES

Viewed as the first great blockbuster of the sound era in motion pictures, *All Quiet On The Western Front* is undoubtedly a classic. More importantly, it remains one of the strongest anti-war statements to date where a German soldier, Lew Ayres, declares, "It is better not to die at all, than to die for your country." The

AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

film was banned in Germany until World War II was over. *All Quiet On The Western Front* explores the horrors of war straight from the battlefront where soldiers die or end up as amputees in the most barbaric conditions. Politics can hardly justify the ravaged state of these men who are stalked by hunger, fear, disease and death as they struggle to survive in dark trenches and engage in violent hand-to-hand combat with the enemy: young men who are no different from them and have no reason to die. Adapted from Erich Maria Remarque's anti-war novel about a bunch of German soldiers, *All Quiet On The Western Front* starkly shows that there is no glory or honour in war.

## ▶ ALL THAT JAZZ

DRAMA | 1979 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BOB FOSSE
CAST:
ROY SCHEIDER, JESSICA LANGE
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

*All That Jazz* is a black comedy on the flip side of creativity. Joe Gideon (Roy Scheider), an innovative, ambitious Broadway director and choreographer, is so obsessed with making his new musical that he completely ignores his family and suffers a near-fatal heart attack. The film is supposedly based on director Bob Fosse's experiences and Joe Gideon is actually Fosse's – the man behind Liza Minelli's Oscar-winning performance in *Cabaret* – alter-ego.

## ▶ ALL THE KING'S MEN

DRAMA | 1949 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROBERT ROSSEN
CAST:
BRODERICK CRAWFORD, JOHN IRELAND
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR (BRODERICK CRAWFORD).

Some films never age due to their topicality. *All The King's Men* remains as fresh as ever even today simply because it unveils the ubiquitous truth: power corrupts, and how! Tracing the rise – and fall – of a populist hero, Willie Stark (Broderick Crawford), who enters politics and becomes governor of Louisiana because he wants to weed out political corruption, the film is a stirring story of good turned evil. It doesn't take long before Stark forgets his principles and grows from social reformer to raving megalomaniac, leapfrogging across the political juggernaut, much to the discomfiture of his loyalist, a disillusioned newspaper reporter, Jack Burden (John Ireland), who becomes a witness to his moral decay.

## ▶ AMADEUS

DRAMA | 1984 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
MILOS FORMAN
CAST:
TOM HULCE, F. MURRAY ABRAHAM

Based on Peter Schaffer's scintillating play, *Amadeus* is a fictionalized account of the rivalry between legendary musician Wolfgang Madeus Mozart (Tom Hulce) and Viennese court composer Antonio Salieri (F. Murray Abraham) who could never accept the power and popularity of Mozart and supposedly caused his death in 1791. Ironically, Salieri himself acknowledged the greatness of Mozart's prodigious creativity and enjoyed his compositions, but only covertly. His rage was

**AWARDS:**
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTION, BEST ACTOR (TOM HULCE).

more against God who had been unfair at imparting his largesse. He assiduously plotted to destroy the career of the "creature", that's what he called Mozart. Interestingly, the film also portrays Mozart in a dehumanized, less deified manner, more as an outlandish, offensive brat, than the exalted icon he is usually projected as. With its riveting soundtrack, *Amadeus* is a powerful re-look at the manic genius that was Mozart.

## ▶ AMERICAN BEAUTY

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
SAM MENDES
**CAST:**
KEVIN SPACEY, ANNETTE BENING
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (KEVIN SPACEY).

Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey) is the ordinary guy who has nothing to lose. Boxed in by a claustrophobic marriage that has lost its zing and an uninspiring middle-level job in an advertising magazine, he has been sleepwalking through life. Nothing interests him anymore, not even his adolescent daughter who, like all neglected kids, harbours an intense dislike for her parents. Lester's life perks up suddenly when he sets eyes on his daughter's best friend Angela (Mena Suvari), a sparkling beauty, who fires his fantasies. The birth of a new Burnham ... Refreshingly, Burnham isn't the prototypal middle-aged, over-the-hill junkie who merely lusts for a little Lolita. Instead, he uses his passion to discover new sources of strength and dignity that enable him to say "No" to everything that irks him. This includes his aggressive, irascible, over-ambitious wife (Annette Bening) and his soul-sapping job. It's the birth of a new hero, who is ordinary yet extraordinary, common yet uncommon, anonymous yet impressive.

## ▶ AN AMERICAN IN PARIS

ROMANCE | 1951 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
VINCENTE MINNELLI
**CAST:**
GENE KELLY, LESLIE CARON
**AWARDS:**
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

The war is over. Jerry Mulligan (Gene Kelly), a former US soldier, moves to Paris to follow his love for painting. But in Paris one needs a patron and Jerry soon finds one in a wealthy expatriate (Nina Fosch) who is more interested in him than in his paintings. Trouble begins when Jerry falls in love with a mysterious young Frenchwoman (Leslie Caron) who seems to be spending more time with his friend. *An American In Paris* is a fun-filled, breezy musical love story with Kelly displaying his exquisite dancing skills to the pulsating music of George Gershwin.

## ▶ ANASTASIA

DRAMA | 1956 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ANATOLE LITVAK
**CAST:**
INGRID BERGMAN, YUL BRYNNER

After the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks reportedly murdered the youngest daughter of Czar Nicholas II, Anastasia. But in *Anastasia* not everybody believes she is dead. There is a trust of $ 10 million waiting for her and it isn't long before there is a claimant. Yul Brynner finds a look-alike in a mysterious

AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (INGRID BERGMAN).

woman (Ingrid Bergman) and trains her to pass off as Anastasia. But is our heiress actually a fraud? Watch Bergman balance romance with intrigue in this period film, set in the 1920s.

## ▶ ANNIE HALL

DRAMA | 1977 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
WOODY ALLEN
CAST:
WOODY ALLEN, DIANE KEATON
AWARDS:
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (DIANE KEATON) AND BEST DIRECTOR.

*Annie Hall* is billed as a "nervous romance". Now, that's a perfect description for a Woody Allen film that showcases the oddities of romance between two oddballs. Allen's Alvy Singer is a high-strung, neurotic New York intellectual who earns his living as a stand-up comedian. Life's an overwritten roster of questions for this quintessential '70s New Yorker, specially when he's trying to find out why his romance with the wild, wannabe-crooner, Annie Hall, turned sour. It's a wordy and hard-hitting satire on the socially dysfunctional '70s when breaking up was easier than coming together.

## ▶ THE APARTMENT

DRAMA | 1960 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BILLY WILDER
CAST:
JACK LEMMON, SHIRLEY MACLAINE
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

Bud Baxter (Jack Lemmon) is down and out in the corporate rat race, but that doesn't deter him from nurturing grand dreams of scaling up the company ladder. And when he doesn't succeed by sheer dint of hard work, he tries other means. Like, renting out his centrally located Manhattan apartment to his boss for his clandestine trysts. So what if he too loves his boss' girl, the vulnerable elevator girl (Shirley MacLaine). A hard-hitting satire on the underbelly of corporate ethics, *The Apartment* has a poignant romantic track that spices up the drama.

## ▶ AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS

DRAMA | 1959 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
MICHAEL ANDERSON
CAST:
DAVID NIVEN, CANTINFLAS, SHIRLEY MACLAINE
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

An adaptation of the Jules Verne classic, *Around The World In Eighty Days* takes you on a roller-coaster ride with that punctilious English gentleman-adventurer Phineas Fogg (David Niven) who wagers a bet with his club pals that he can circumnavigate the world in 80 days. With a valise brimming over with pounds and a devoted manservant, Passerpartout (Cantinflas), he goes on a hot air balloon, mounts an elephant, boards a steamship and takes a train to achieve the almost impossible task. And yes, he lands in India too where he rescues the helpless Princess Aouda (Shirley MacLaine) before she's immolated on the pyre of her dead husband. Oh, those Indians! A great escape.

## ▶ AS GOOD AS IT GETS

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JAMES L. BROOKS
**CAST:**
JACK NICHOLSON, HELEN HUNT, GREG KINNEAR
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, FOR BEST ACTOR (JACK NICHOLSON), BEST ACTRESS (HELEN HUNT).

Melvill (Jack Nicholson), a misanthrope writer of romantic fiction; Carol (Helen Hunt), a waitress who is also a harried single-mother; and Simon (Greg Kinnear), the low-on-inspiration gay artist: this is the trio that tries to do the tightrope walk and find an equilibrium in their tangled web of relationships. In *As Good As It Gets*, Melvill not only suffers from Compulsive Obsessive Disorder but also is socially dysfunctional and fails to communicate with anyone around him. It takes a down-to-earth waitress, who serves him breakfast every day, and a sensitive artist, who lives next-door, to bring out the best in him. He learns that communication can be more than insults. It can be about love, understanding, empathy and friendship. With Nicholson playing his eccentric role to perfection, this unconventional story showcases love with all its angularities and oddities.

## ▶ AVIATOR

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN SCORSESE
**CAST:**
LEONARDO DICAPRIO, CATE BLANCHETT, KATE BECKINSALE
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS.

The boy has grown up. Leonardo DiCaprio steps into adulthood as an actor with *Aviator*. Ostensibly a biopic on America's greatest maverick millionaire, Howard Hughes, who made his millions during the War, despite his eccentricities – or is it due to his eccentricities? – the film is actually philosophy. On dreaming Big, aiming Big, achieving Big ... The youth who inherited his father's tool factory while only an 18-year-old, poured its profits in grandiose schemes. He used his legacy to rewrite the rules of society and sculpt the future of a nation instead of recycling nuts and bolts. When he was a kid, Howard told his mom, "I want to make big planes and big movies ..." That's what he did. On the personal level, *Aviator* scores as it traces the kinky man's affairs with two of Hollywood's most memorable women – Katherine Hepburn (Cate) and Ava Gardner (Kate). Of the two, it's Cate Blanchett who matches up to the 'all acute angles' personality of Howard. The chemistry between them lights up the screen. But the film belongs to Leonardo alone who grows from 18 to adulthood without losing the core of his character: a dreamer-doer who didn't quite have it right.

## ▶ BABEL

DRAMA | 2006 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ INARRITU

Four different families, four different cultures are linked together by the story of one gun that travels across continents, along with the terror it spews from its barrel. And in the current scenario where clash of civilizations has created intolerance and distrust, the Biblical prophecies of the Tower of Babel – a place when no one understood what the other speaks – seem to have

**CAST:**
BRAD PITT, CATE BLANCHETT
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

come true. In *Babel*, Director Inarritu does not tread the beaten track either in his style of narration or his story. An act of kindness by a Japanese hunter creates havoc in the lives of a disparate group of people, spanning across continents and cultures. The Japanese gifts his gun to a Moroccan guide after a successful hunting expedition in Morocco. The gun ends with a poor family of goatherds who purchase it to keep away jackals. But a day of playful target practice by the goatherd's two young boys ends up with a stray bullet hitting an American tourist (Cate Blanchett). She is on a healing trip with her husband (Brad Pitt), after they've lost their infant son. But getting his wife back to civilization from the godforsaken desert where nobody understands him isn't the only problem that Brad encounters. Back home, his two other kids are embroiled in a stowaway drama on the Mexican border, while in distant Tokyo, the original gun owner contends with his personal trauma. A stunning landscape and some fine performances make *Babel* a powerful denouement of contemporary chaos.

## ▶ BEN-HUR

DRAMA | 1959 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
WILLIAM WYLER
**CAST:**
CHARLTON HESTON, STEPHEN BOYD, JACK HAWKINS
**AWARDS:**
ELEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (CHARLTON HESTON).

In *Ben-Hur*, it's the era of Jesus Christ. But the drama is focused on the travails of Judah Ben-Hur, a Jew, who was unjustly sent to the galleys to work as a slave by his childhood friend, Messala (Stephen Boyd), who heads the Roman Garrison. But Ben-Hur (Charlton Heston) becomes a free man after he saves the life of the ship's commander (Jack Hawkins) and returns to take vengeance on Messala. Ben-Hur seeks to settle scores in the climactic chariot race. The race has become legendary in celluloid history. Choreographed by famous stuntman Yakima Kanutt, this 15-minute adrenalin-pumping action sequence leveraged the 212-minute epic to be part of film lore.

## ▶ THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES

DRAMA | 1946 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
WILLIAM WYLER
**CAST:**
MYRNA ROY, FREDRIC MARCH, DANA ANDREWS, TERESA WRIGHT
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (FREDRIC MARCH) AND BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (HAROLD RUSSELL).

The war is over. The Nazis have been defeated. The Japanese have been bombed. Three war veterans return to their hometown and try and pick up the strings of their lives. Not an easy task, as Al Stephenson (Fredric March), an infantryman, points out, "Last year, it was kill Japs. This year, it is make money." However, finding suitable jobs isn't the only problem for the three war heroes: Al Stephenson, a happily married family man, Homer Parrish (Harold Russell), a double amputee who has hooks in place of his hands and Fred Derry (Dana Andrews) an Air Force Captain who married a materialistic girl just before he left for the bombings. Re-connecting with their family and coming to terms with a world that has changed in their absence, are the immediate and arduous tasks that they face. *The Best Years Of Our Lives* is a celebration of life, brimming over with optimism, despite dealing with the flip side of war.

## ▶ BONNIE AND CLYDE

THRILLER | 1967 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ARTHUR PENN
**CAST:**
WARREN BEATTY, FAYE DUNAWAY
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

*Bonnie And Clyde*, a biopic, is a soft and romantic look at the life of Bonnie Parker (Faye Dunaway) and Clyde Barrow (Warren Beatty), two Texas robbers, who spent their short yet dramatic life robbing during the Great Depression. They are ruthless, violent and decidedly on the wrong side of law. Yet, despite the ethical imbalance, the film serenades the two as an adventurous couple, living out their romance and rebellion against a dull, staid, depressed world. With great chemistry, wild passion and loads of action, *Bonnie And Clyde* is for the gangsta rap cineaste.

## ▶ BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
OLIVER STONE
**CAST:**
TOM CRUISE, TOM BERENGER
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR (OLIVER STONE).

*Born On The Fourth Of July* is Oliver Stone's strongest political film with a powerful indictment of the Vietnam War that reduced young American soldiers to mere pawns. Based on the autobiography of Ron Kovic (Tom Cruise), a small-town youth, who begins as an idealist, enlists in the Army, serves in Vietnam and ends up a broken man: a cripple. He realizes there can be no justification for war that is ingloriously romanticized and vainly peddled as a synonym for manhood by manipulating politicians. *Born On The Fourth Of July* unfolds through three gripping stages: Kovic's idealism about war, his actual experience of its brutality and his final disillusionment.

## ▶ BOYS DON'T CRY

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
KIMBERLY PIERCE
**CAST:**
HILARY SWANK, CHLOE SEVIGNY, PETER SAARSGARD
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (HILARY SWANK).

Based on a real-life case, *Boys Don't Cry* is the gripping account of the trauma that a transgender teen had to face in a small US town, all because she wanted to live life as a boy. Brandon Teena was born Teena Brandon, but chose to live most of her teen years as a boy, while waiting for a sex change operation. She has a girlfriend (Chloe Sevigny) and a bunch of male buddies, to whom she does not reveal her true identity. But when her male friends learn the truth, they rape her in front of her girlfriend and finally shoot her when she dares to report the violence to the police. The highpoint of *Boys Don't Cry* is the powerhouse

portrayal by Hilary Swank of the film's protagonist. Hilary's Brandon is a poignant picture of a brave teenager who dares to follow her dreams and stands up to the in-built prejudices and gender violence of a closed community.

## ▶ BRAVEHEART

ACTION | 1995 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MEL GIBSON
**CAST:**
MEL GIBSON, SOPHIE MARCEU, PATRICK MCGOOHAN
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

Through *Braveheart*, Mel Gibson pays tribute to legendary Scottish hero William Wallace. Leading his nation against England in circa 1300, Wallace exemplified a rare breed of patriots that refused to buckle down, even in the face of death. But *Braveheart* isn't as much history as an unadulterated action flick that raises war to the status of an epic drama. And if you thought there were just horses, soldiers and shoot-outs, there is romance too. The Scottish warrior charms the French wife (Sophie Marceu) of the English Prince simply by the way he looks at her. Soon, she is revealing state secrets to him, though he is widely regarded as England's enemy No. 1. *Braveheart* has a heady mix of intrigue, action and valour, making it simply irresistible.

## ▶ THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI

ACTION | 1957 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
DAVID LEAN
**CAST:**
ALEC GUINNESS, WILLIAM HOLDEN
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST ACTOR (ALEC GUINNESS).

"One day the war will be over and I hope the people who use this bridge in years to come will remember how it was built and who built it," muses Colonel Nicholson (Alec Guinness) as his battalion of British POWs work for completion of the controversial bridge over the river Kwai. Set against World War II in a POW camp in Burma, *The Bridge On The River Kwai* focuses on the confrontation between two men: the proud and disciplined British army officer, Colonel Nicholson, and the equally principled and patriotic Japanese officer, Colonel Saito (Sessue Hayakawa), who wants to use his POWs to build a bridge that would help the Japanese cross into Rangoon. Initially, the British officer refuses to relent, waving the Geneva Convention that states that POWs shall not be used for manual labour, but later acquiesces for the well-being of his comrades. The war is essentially reduced to a battle of wills between two strong personalities. The plot weaves through a maze of conflicting loyalties that arise when a renegade American POW (William Holden) tries to sabotage the bridge. With an award-winning performance by Alec Guinness and an awesome eye for detail, David Lean's film is classic war drama.

## ▶ BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN

DRAMA | 2005 | ★★★½

In *Brokeback Mountain*, the plot revolves around the illicit affair between two cowboys who have a clandestine relationship

DIRECTION:
ANG LEE
CAST:
HEATH LEDGER, JAKE GYLLENHAAL, ANNE HATHAWAY
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING ONE FOR BEST DIRECTOR (ANG LEE).

because strict social norms wouldn't allow them to come out of the closet. Aesthetically, *Brokeback Mountain* captures the visual splendour of Wyoming — quintessential cowboy country — with great artistry. Even the morals and mores of the 1960s and 1970s are dealt with elegiac sensitivity. While tending sheep on a cold night on the summit of Brokeback Mountain, Ennis del Mar (Heath Ledger) and Jack Twister (Jake Gyllenhaal) discover a forbidden passion for each other. Soon, the passion grows into forbidden love, forcing the two to take off into the mountains. All they want to do is to live together on a ranch, but strict social mores and family compulsions end the affair on a tragic note. Watch *Brokeback Mountain* for its visual opulence and unconventional storyline.

## ▶ BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID

CRIME | 1969 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
GEORGE ROY HILL
CAST:
PAUL NEWMAN, ROBERT REDFORD, KATHARINE ROSS
AWARD:
FOUR OSCARS.

*Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid* is the best among films where two heroes occupy centre stage. Robert Redford is the deadly Sundance Kid who is an expert with guns and kills remorselessly, while Paul Newman is Butch Cassidy, the ruthless railroad robber whose talkative nature hides a vicious streak. Together, they recreate the exploits of two of America's most infamous real-life outlaws and add a mystical romance to an immoral tale of heist and murder. When the American West becomes too wild for them, they head for distant Bolivia, which they believe is ideal for lawbreakers. Obviously, they are mistaken and meet a violent end. But the impression they leave behind is of two charming rogues, who were more heroes than villains. Only movie lore can make this magical twist.

## ▶ CABARET

DRAMA | 1972 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BOB FOSSE
CAST:
LIZA MINELLI, MICHAEL YORK
AWARDS:
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR AND BEST ACTRESS (LIZA MINELLI).

It's Berlin in the 1930s. The streets are silently being taken over by Nazi thugs as hate crimes are becoming the order of the day. Berlin is giving way to fear and racism. But there's song and dance still left in the Kit Kat Club, as cabaret dancer Sally Bowles (Liza Minelli) rustles up a sizzling act, night after night. *Cabaret* is a celebration of decadence, before the Nazis take over ... Minelli is the archetypal livewire who believes life is simply song and dance and tries to turn her back to everything that does not fit into her hedonistic credo, including Nazism. The film's a grand musical, with a great act by Liza Minelli.

## ▶ CACTUS FLOWER

COMEDY | 1969 | ★★★½

In *Cactus Flower*, a middle-aged dentist, Julian Winston (Walter Mathau), doesn't want a commitment, although he's fine with

**DIRECTION:** GENE SAKS
**CAST:** WALTER MATHAU, INGRID BERGMAN, GOLDIE HAWN
**AWARD:** OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (GOLDIE HAWN).

having a young mistress, Toni Simmons (Goldie Hawn). He carries on his relationship with her by posing as an unhappily married man, in need of love. But soon, his love for his breezy girlfriend turns real and he wants to marry her. So how does he get out of the sticky situation? By brandishing his nurse, Stephanie Dickinson (Ingrid Bergman), as his faux wife. But woman, ah! His mistress begins to sympathize with his to-be-dumped wife. There are fireworks on screen, as Goldie Hawn proves she's one of Hollywood's most ebullient actors. Catch Ingrid Bergman trying to pitch in a light-hearted role. Quite unusual.

## ▶ CAPOTE

DRAMA | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** BENNET MILLER
**CAST:** PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN, CATHERINE KEENER
**AWARD:** OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN).

What went behind the writing of that *tour de force* non-fiction best-seller *In Cold Blood*? That's the subject of this riveting drama about a writer's attempts to create a best-seller out of real life drama. Truman Capote published his literary blockbuster about the 1959 murder of a Kansas family in 1966. But before he wrote it, he spent years collating data and getting close to killers of the Clutter family of Holcomb, Kansas, and to investigating officer Alvin Dewey (Chris Cooper). This was a special assignment for the *New Yorker* and marked the beginning of a new style of journalism that goes today by the name of reality bytes. A carefully etched portrait of Capote by Seymour Hoffman, coupled with a detailed recreation on the 1960s, make for compelling viewing of *Capote*.

## ▶ CASABLANCA

DRAMA | 1942 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:** MICHAEL CURTIZ
**CAST:** HUMPHREY BOGART, INGRID BERGMAN
**AWARDS:** THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

War can never get more romantic than this. An embittered American expatriate, Ricky Blaine (Humphrey Bogart), meets his former flame (Ingrid Bergman) in a quaint Moroccan town that is about to be engulfed by the violence of World War II. Even as the duo reminisces and rekindles its old Parisian romance, Ricky knows that he must send his beloved to safety and settle for separation, 'coz that's what love's all about. Interestingly, *Casablanca* features among the top three in all lists of Best Loved Films and remains one of cinema's most memorable romances. If Humphrey Bogart's Ricky Blaine lingers as the most mesmerizing lover on celluloid then his saloon, Café Americain, is perhaps the most exotic setting for love to bloom. *Casablanca* is a must for diehard romantics.

## ▶ CHARIOTS OF FIRE

DRAMA | 1981 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** HUGH HUDSON

Set against the backdrop of the 1924 Olympics, *Chariots Of Fire* serenades the spirit of two British track athletes – Harold

CAST:
BEN CROSS, IAN CHARLESON
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

Abrahams (Ben Cross) and Eric Liddell (Ian Charleson) – as they lead their country to victory. While Liddell, a devout Christian, ran for God, Harold, a Jew, gave his best shot in order to prove his worth. A gritty sporting encounter, *Chariots of Fire* celebrates the true spirit of the Olympics: commitment, perseverance, team spirit and an unbridled desire to succeed.

## ▶ CHICAGO

MUSICAL | 2002 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROB MARSHALL
CAST:
RENEE ZELLWEGER, CATHERINE ZETA-JONES, RICHARD GERE
AWARDS:
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

Rob Marshall's devilishly grand movie version of Bob Fosse's 1975 Broadway musical, *Chicago*, is an absolute winner from the very start when a mesmeric Catherine Zeta-Jones throws up her legs and croons *All That Jazz*. From the smoky Blues club to the dingy prison cells, *Chicago* is a roller-coaster ride through the underbelly of the 1920s entertainment industry in the Windy City. The film traces the rise of young, talented Roxie Hart (Renee Zellweger) in the cruel, dog-eat-dog world of vaudeville. Roxie dreams of following in the footsteps of her idol, Velma Kelly (Catherine Zeta-Jones), and is willing to do anything to face the arc lights. So, what if it means murder, lies, perjury and betrayal? Here, where passion and ambition reign supreme, morality is easily expendable, whether for stars, wannabes or the charismatic yet venal criminal lawyer, Billy Flynn (Richard Gere). Wild, winsome, vibrant, *Chicago* is an absolute must-see.

## ▶ CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD

DRAMA | 1986 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
RANDA HAINES
CAST:
WILLIAM HURT, MARLEE MATLIN, PIPER LAURIE
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (MARLEE MATLIN).

James Leeds (William Hurt) is a special needs teacher who arrives at a new school and falls in love with Sarah (Marlee Matlin), an angry deaf woman, who works there. Although Leeds is an extremely sensitive man, apart from being an innovative teacher, Sarah is both physically and emotionally challenged, since she has been treated badly all her life due to her debility. A moving romance between two people in expedient circumstances, *Children Of A Lesser God* remains one of the most respected films on physical impairment.

## ▶ CHINATOWN

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROMAN POLANSKI
CAST:
JACK NICHOLSON, FAYE DUNAWAY, JOHN HUSTON
AWARDS:
OSCAR FOR BEST SCREENPLAY.

With one of Jack Nicholson's most memorable performances, *Chinatown* is film noir at its best. Nicholson plays a private detective who has been hired for a routine case of adultery. But when the subject of his investigation, a municipal official in Los Angeles water department, accidentally drowns and goons and murderers begin to threaten our nosey detective, the film turns into an art house thriller. Nicholson is hell-bent on uncovering the corruption in the public department – a reflection of the LA Water Wars in the 1930s – even though it means standing up to the dead man's menacing business partner (John Huston) and getting embroiled in a romantic liaison with the deceased's widow (Faye Dunaway) who is mysterious and enigmatic. *Chinatown* is a gripping picture of the mess that lies behind the glittering city lights.

## ▶ CIDER HOUSE RULES

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
LASSE HALLSTROM
CAST:
TOBEY MAGUIRE, CHARLIZE THERON, MICHAEL CAINE
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS.

It's the 1940s but young Homer Wells (Tobey Maguire) is ineligible for military duty due to a heart condition. He has spent most of his life at St. Clouds, an orphanage run by Dr. Wilbur Larch (Michael Caine), who is more of a godfather to the young boy and imparts his medical knowledge to him. So much so, Homer is almost a qualified doctor, minus a degree. However, he has never seen the world beyond the orphanage and gets a chance to explore when an Air Force Officer (Paul Rudd) and his girlfriend Candy Kendell (Charlize Theron) come to the orphanage, seeking an abortion. Homer follows the beautiful girl into the world beyond and falls in love with her, while the patient doctor waits for him to return, with fast-fading hope. Does his journey of self-discovery lead him back to the orphanage? *Cider House Rules* is a gripping account of a rare friendship, based on a book by John Irving.

## ▶ CITIZEN KANE

DRAMA | 1942 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ORSON WELLES
CAST:
ORSON WELLES, DOROTHY COMINGORE, WILLIAM ALLAND
AWARDS:
NINE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST ACTOR (ORSON WELLES).

A newspaper tycoon dies a lonely death, uttering on his deathbed the last mysterious word, "Rosebud". Arousing immense curiosity, the word becomes the focus of an investigation by a battery of newsmen. *Citizen Kane*'s towering portrait of a media giant drew parallels from real life for the hero, Charles Foster Kane (Orson Welles), was reportedly patterned on William Randolph Hearst, the 1940s answer to Bill Gates, Ted Turner and Rupert Murdoch, all rolled into one. Kane, who begins his journalistic career as a champion of the underdog, follows the usual trajectory of power, glamour, money and fame that replace his cause-oriented motives. And as journalists try to decode his life while trying to find the

meaning of "Rosebud", they draw the picture of a lonely man at the top, trapped in a loveless marriage, a doomed extramarital affair and a cold mansion. The film is timeless, simply because there is a "rosebud" in every man's life. Rosebud was the name of a sled that was taken away from Kane when he was being sent to boarding school. Metaphorically, the word symbolizes the universal yearning for unbridled joyousness and innocence that elude mankind. In all lists of chartbusters, *Citizen Kane* is acclaimed as Hollywood's best film.

## ▶ COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER

DRAMA | 1980 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MICHAEL APTED
**CAST:**
SISSY SPACEK, TOMMY LEE JONES
**AWARDS:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (SISSY SPACEK).

*Coal Miner's Daughter* is a biographical account of the exemplary life of Loretta Lynn (Sissy Spacek). A country musician, she rose from dire poverty to capture the airwaves. Born in a coal miner's family and married off at an early age to a headstrong, demanding husband (Tommy Lee Jones), Lynn rose above her adverse circumstances by dint of sheer grit and talent. Surprisingly, it was her husband who first realized her potential when he heard her singing lullabies to their children.

## ▶ COLD MOUNTAIN

ROMANCE | 2003 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ANTHONY MINGHELLA
**CAST:**
JUDE LAW, NICOLE KIDMAN, RENEE ZELLWEGER
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (RENEE ZELLWEGER).

1864. The American Civil War has transformed the land into a barbaric setting. In *Cold Mountain*, Private Inman (Jude Law) receives a letter from his lost beloved as he lies in hospital, recuperating from a neck wound. "If you fight, stop fighting. If you march, stop marching. Come back to me," writes Ada (Nicole Kidman) from her farm in Cold Mountain. Inman treats this as an order, deserts the army and sets out on his perilous trek back home. Why? Because Inman still remembers the warmth of that single kiss he exchanged with Ada before setting off for war, three years ago. Inman's Homeric return journey and Ada's Herculean efforts to keep her farm safe from rampaging Yankees become a parallel battle for the two protagonists. But there's a difference. While Ada has the feisty Southern lass (Renee Zellweger) to help her survive, Inman must rely on personal valour alone. The bottom line? See it for Renee and Jude.

## ▶ THE COLOUR OF MONEY

DRAMA | 1986 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN SCORSESE
**CAST:**
PAUL NEWMAN, TOM CRUISE, MARY ELIZABETH MASTRANTONIO

Fast Eddie Felson (Paul Newman) first appeared in Robert Rossen's *The Hustler* in 1961 and stole the limelight with his masterly tactics and flamboyance on the pool table. He reappears, 25 years later, under Martin Scorsese's direction, but this time, he's sobered down. He does play pool, but neither for money nor for staggering high stakes. *The Colour Of Money* isn't

AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (PAUL NEWMAN).

exactly a sequel, even though it features the same character. This time, Eddie spends his time training a younger kid, Vincent (Tom Cruise), to step into the shoes of the invincible hustler and enter the world of big money stakes pool. It's the complicated relationship between the amateur and the pro that forms the film's highlight.

## ▶ COMING HOME

DRAMA | 1978 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
HAL ASHBY
CAST:
JANE FONDA, JOHN VOIGHT, BRUCE DERN
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (JOHN VOIGHT) AND BEST ACTRESS (JANE FONDA).

Sally (Jane Fonda) believes that men have opinions: women just believe in them. She's ideal wife material, being unquestioning and hopelessly devoted to her Marine husband Bob (Bruce Dern). Bob leaves for Vietnam because he believes in the cause. Sally believes in it too. But soon she finds that she has opinions that differ from her husband, and a life that allows her to carve a separate identity for herself. She meets an angry, cynical Luke (John Voight) who has just returned from Vietnam as a paraplegic. Soon, their friendship grows into intimacy, even as they discover their own selves while discovering each other. It's an intensely moving, mature love story, handled with great sensitivity.

## ▶ THE CONSTANT GARDENER

DRAMA | 2005 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
FERNANDO MEIRELLES
CAST:
RALPH FIENNES, RACHEL WEISZ
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Based on John Le Carre's book, *The Constant Gardener* is a quiet, gentle film that draws you with its gripping drama and gritty portrayals, specially by Ralph Fiennes who plays a reclusive diplomat who is reluctantly drawn into a Third World versus First World plot of intrigue and exploitation. Left on his own, Fiennes would just tend the exotic flowers in his garden and leave the raving and ranting to his fiery wife (Rachel Weisz) who reminds you of *apni* Angelina Jolie with her African crusade. It's a story that moves backwards after Fiennes' wife is murdered while pursuing her developmental projects in Kenyan ghettos and shanty towns. Fiennes tries to investigate the murder and ends up uncovering a larger-than-life plot of corporate greed where a big pharmaceutical company has no qualms in converting a whole population of humans into hapless guinea pigs. All for the sake of bloating its bottom line ... A compelling film, *The Constant Gardener* is meant for the serious cinema buff who likes a message in mainstream.

## ▶ CRASH

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
PAUL HAGGIS

A compelling post 9/11 film, *Crash* is the quintessential clash of civilization movie. Or should we call it the crash of civilization film? For, it dissects the modern, cosmopolitan mindset, only to showcase dark recesses of racial discrimination and ethnic blind

**CAST:**
DON CHEADLE, THANDIE NEWTON, MATT DILLON, SANDRA BULLOCK, BRENDAN FRASER
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

spots: the cause of mayhem in contemporary society. Haggis, who scripted Clint Eastwood's *Million Dollar Baby*, recreates a day in the life of an average LA citizen where the white versus black conflict still rips apart the social fabric. So, we have the District Attorney's upmarket wife (Sandra Bullock) who hangs on to her husband's arm whenever she walks in a black neighbourhood. Then, there is the veteran cop (Matt Dillon) who molests a woman (Thandie Newton), only because she is black and a Persian grocer who wants a gun because he feels the proverbial outsider in a land where racial profiling is normal. And, yes, we also have the 'normal' non-biased people – the black cop (Don Cheadle) who feels there is no discrimination and the white rookie who wants to fight against it. In this intense drama, you have people shedding their biases and oscillating between trust and distrust, with no neat answers and no pat solutions. A compelling film, *Crash* is so contemporary that you just can't miss it.

## ▶ THE CRYING GAME

THRILLER | 1992 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
NEIL JORDAN
**CAST:**
FOREST WHITAKER, MIRANDA RICHARDSON, STEPHEN REA
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST WRITING.

Jody (Forest Whitaker), a young British soldier, is seduced by an IRA activist (Miranda Richardson) and abducted by her colleagues who want to use him as a hostage for the release of one of their own. The hostage has just 24 hours to live but he manages to befriend the enemy, Fergus (Stephen Rea), a soft-hearted IRA rebel, assigned to guard him and dispose him of in due time. The two strike up a rare connection that sees Fergus entering the dead man's life and falling in love with his girlfriend (Jaye Davidson) whose picture he had seen in the dead man's wallet. *The Crying Game* is a racy thriller that lays bare secrets of the human heart.

## ▶ DANCES WITH WOLVES

DRAMA | 1990 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
KEVIN COSTNER
**CAST:**
KEVIN COSTNER, MARY

Kevin Costner made his debut as a director with *Dances With Wolves*, an epical film that refused to brand native Indians as savages. On the contrary, here we have an American soldier who deserts the army and 'goes Injun', after coming in contact with the Sioux tribe in a deserted US outpost during the Civil

MCDONNELL, GRAHAM GREENE
AWARDS:
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE.

War. Lt. John Dunbar (Kevin Costner) not only gets lured into the customs and lifestyles of the Indians, led by the serious Kicking Bird (Graham Greene), but also adopts a Sioux name for himself, Dances with Wolves, and finds a soul mate in the beautiful Sioux woman, Stands With A Fist (Mary McDonnell). Visually stunning, *Dances With Wolves* boasts of some riveting performances and an alternate viewpoint on American history.

## ▶ DEAD MAN WALKING

DRAMA | 1995 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
TIM ROBBINS
CAST:
SEAN PENN, SUSAN SARANDON
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (SUSAN SARANDON).

*Dead Man Walking* makes a strong plea for ban on capital punishment. And the fact that it does so for a hardcore criminal, Matthew Poncelet (Sean Penn), only makes the case stronger. For the film does not try to prove that the death row criminal was wrongly accused. Matthew Poncelet is projected as a despicable, racist killer, yet he finds an advocate in a benign nun, Sister Helen Prejean (Susan Sarandon), who believes that the right to life is sacrosanct, even for a killer. Crucially, she must face her own moral dilemma as she counters the claims of the victim's family with her pleas against capital punishment. A thought-provoking film on a topical debate, *Dead Man Walking* is distinguished by power-packed performances by Sean Penn and Susan Sarandon.

## ▶ DEAD POET'S SOCIETY

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
PETER WEIR
CAST:
ROBIN WILLIAMS, ETHAN HAWKE
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

An English teacher, Robert Keating (Robin Williams), comes to Welton Academy, America's foremost prep school, and unleashes a revolution. Through poetry and philosophy, he teaches freethinking and creativity to students as opposed to conformism and regimentation. The Academy, famous for producing doctors, engineers and bureaucrats, can't handle a bunch of freethinkers, who not only quote Shelley and Thoreau, but also stand on their desks to get a different perspective – a more exalted one – on life. And when one young freethinker turns his back on authority and refuses to kowtow to his father's wishes, it's time for a clampdown. Robert Keating must go, poetry should be declared dead, and convention should rule. So what if the students are back on the desks, standing up in protest against their favourite teacher's dismissal? *Dead Poet's Society* takes a whole new look at education and makes a fervent plea against creating foot soldiers out of students.

## ▶ THE DEER HUNTER

DRAMA | 1978 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
MICHAEL CIMINO

*The Deer Hunter* is one of the most gut-wrenching films on the detrimental effects of the Vietnam War on the American psyche. Three friends – Steven (John Savage), Michael (Robert De Niro),

CAST:
ROBERT DE NIRO, MERYL STREEP, CHRISTOPHER WALKEN, JOHN SAVAGE
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

Nick (Christopher Walken) – join the battlefront, after having one last spree together. They decide to go on a deer hunt, for one last shot. The metaphor of the hunt haunts them in Act II where they are captured by the Vietcong and ruthlessly tortured. Act II sees our war heroes return as war victims, permanently scarred for life, with wounds that vary from the physical to the psychological. It's left to Michael to bring his friends back into the fold and throw light on America's agonizing attempts to rise from the ashes of history's worst debacle.

## ▶ THE DEPARTED

THRILLER | 2006 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
MARTIN SCORSESE
CAST:
JACK NICHOLSON, LEONARDO DICAPRIO, MATT DAMON
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTION.

*The Departed* is an absolute delight. And it really doesn't matter if it's a remake of Hong Kong blockbuster *Infernal Affairs*. Because the Boston cops and robbers create a whole new world on screen: one where crime becomes glitzy, the mob is stunningly violent and policing becomes a crazy tryst with death and violence. If Matt Damon is deadly as Colin Sullivan, the infiltrator in the police department, Leonardo DiCaprio lends a manic energy to his rendition of Billy Costigan, an undercover cop, who tries to cope with the evil that unfolds before his eyes. But having a ball amidst them all is good old Jack Nicholson as Frank Costella, a gangster, who loves to play it loud. He exudes devilish glee as he rules the underworld. However, it is the racy screenplay – almost like a revised *The Godfather* script, complete with pungent quotes – and cutting-edge action that make the film a must-see.

## ▶ DOG DAY AFTERNOON

CRIME | 1975 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
SIDNEY LUMET
CAST:
AL PACINO, JOHHNY CAZALE
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

The bank heist should have taken just 10 minutes. But it ended up as one of the longest afternoons in New York as the media decided to cover it live and transform it into one big voyeuristic circus. More importantly, the robbers and the hostages decided to grab their 15 minutes of fame and played up to the gallery with flashy histrionics. Based on a real-life heist, *Dog Day Afternoon* presages the media explosion and boasts of a high-on-drama act by Al Pacino as the street-smart, ex-Vietnam soldier-turned-robber who desperately wants money for a sex-change operation of his homosexual partner.

## ▶ DREAMGIRLS

MUSICAL | 2006 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
BILL CONDON

*Dreamgirls*, set in the musical '60s, traces the rise of an all girls band and then documents their debacle, as they fall prey – don't they always? – to infighting, rivalry and petty ambition. And like all success stories, this one too is a rags-to-riches one

**CAST:**
BEYONCE KNOWLES, JENNIFER HUDSON, EDDIE MURPHY, JAMIE FOX
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

where three people from small town take the glamorous world of pop music by storm, only to realize that Andy Warhol had said it all: Everybody truly just has 15 minutes of fame! The songs do get somewhat repetitive, scenes predictable and the black power bits evoke a sense of *deja vu* (isn't it time Hollywood got over its let's-set-racism-right fetish?). But *Dreamgirls* is a must for Broadway lovers.

## ▶ DRIVING MISS DAISY

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
BRUCE BERESFORD
**CAST:**
MORGAN FREEMAN, JESSICA TANDY
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (JESSICA TANDY).

The stubborn and difficult Miss Daisy (Jessica Tandy) has a minor car accident and loses her license. Her son (Dan Ackroyd) hires a driver for her, the gentle, mild-mannered Hoke (Morgan Freeman), who bears his employee's domineering attitude with infinite grace and patience. It's his demeanour that draws the old woman close to him and soon the two develop a friendship that transcends barriers of race and colour. Their relationship is not easily accepted by society because Miss Daisy is Jewish and Hoke is black. *Driving Miss Daisy* is a heartwarming tale about the true nature of friendship.

## ▶ E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

SCI-FI | 1982 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:**
HENRY THOMAS, DREW BARRYMORE, DEE WALLACE
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS.

We'd call *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* an ageless movie. First, because its appeal is universal, irrespective of the viewer's age. And, second, because each time you watch it, it recreates the same delightful sense of fun that it did when you saw it first. Spielberg creates sheer magic in this movie about a rare friendship between a lonely alien and a bunch of kids who are trying to cope with their parent's recent divorce and of a life without their father. For the kids, the friendly alien with the funny face ends up as a surrogate father, secret buddy and loneliness buster. For E.T., the kids end up as friendly humans and surrogate family on an alien planet. Add to this the spectacle of bicycles flying across the moon, a spaceship landing on earth, the fear of a hostile government trying to separate newfound friends, and you have the perfect tale on love and friendship that transcends galaxies and boundaries.

## ▶ ELIZABETH

PERIOD | 1998 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
SHEKHAR KAPUR
**CAST:**
CATE BLANCHETT, GEOFFREY RUSH, JOSEPH FIENNES
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

*Elizabeth* is a visual delight, where history isn't treated as a mothballed story from dog-eared textbooks. England's Golden Age (the 16th -century), under its Virgin Queen (Elizabeth I), has been dealt in a warm, dramatic and intensely human fashion, in contrast to the cold and clinical handling of historical facts in many films. Interestingly, Shekhar Kapur focuses on the initial years when Elizabeth's tumultuous ascent to power has all the *masala* of high drama. The court intrigues are shadowy and

ominous, romance is clandestine and passionate and the regalia riveting. Even as the metamorphosis of the young, carefree maiden into an ashen-faced monarch in a man's world makes *Elizabeth* a meaningful feminist film.

## ▶ THE ENGLISH PATIENT

ROMANCE | 1996 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ANTHONY MINGHELLA
**CAST:**
RALPH FIENNES, JULIETTE BINOCHE, KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS
**AWARDS:**
NINE OSCARS.

It's World War II. A two-seater plane flies precariously across the Egyptian desert and crash-lands. A nurse (Juliette Binoche) looks after the critically burned man, called the English patient (Ralph Fiennes). And it is while washing his wounds and trying to alleviate his pain that she learns about the patient's tragic love affair that seems to have caused him more anguish than his burns. He is actually a Hungarian Count who had fallen in love with a married English woman (Kristin Scott Thomas) and earned the wrath of her husband (Colin Firth). With adultery, war, treachery and heartbreak: the canvas is more expansive than the unbounded desert which forms the tumultuous backdrop to the adulterous affair. *The English Patient* is a powerful adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's Booker Prize winning classic.

## ▶ ERIN BROCKOVICH

DRAMA | 2000 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SODERBERGH
**CAST:**
JULIA ROBERTS, ALBERT FINNEY
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (JULIA ROBERTS).

Erin Brockovich isn't extraordinary. She is the antithesis of nice young things. Consider the downside in her life. Erin's been divorced twice. A high-school dropout, she has three kids, keeps changing boyfriends, dresses outrageously and her language is invariably peppered with four-letter words. Is Erin a hero? Not by conventional norms. One look at her plunging necklines, rising hemlines, brattish behaviour and people promptly dismiss her with expletives. Loose, immoral, hooker-like... But Erin turns out to be a winner. She not only wins the largest settlement ever paid in a direct-action lawsuit in US history but also changes the lives of 600 plaintiffs in her small, desert town. And she does all this accidentally while working as a file clerk. In the small law firm where she works, she stumbles upon a cover-up involving industrial poisoning in the community. Erin redefines women

power. And the fact that *Erin Brockovich* is based on a real-life story only shows that strong women do exist. Indeed, Julia Roberts deserves accolades for her electrifying depiction of a balsy woman.

## ▶ ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND

ROMANCE | 2004 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** MICHAEL GONDRY
**CAST:** JIM CARREY, KATE WINSLET
**AWARD:** ONE OSCAR.

Science fiction at its quirky best, *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind* boasts of something else. It boasts of Jim Carrey donning a serious face and making an impact that almost equals the zany *Mask*. But what is more engaging is the premise of the film: can true love be erased, even if all its vestiges are wiped out? The free-spirited and extrovert Clementine (Kate Winslet) doesn't like to be unhappy. So, when her love story turns sour, she goes in for a scientific experiment and erases all memories of her romance with Joel (Jim Carrey). An aggrieved and vengeance-hungry Joel tries to do the same, but midway, he discovers there was a lot of sunshine in their affair; sunshine that he wants to hold onto. So he tries to hide those memories in hidden corners, even as scientists try to create the spotless, pain-free mind. Truly, this is a mind-altering love story.

## ▶ FARGO

THRILLER | 1996 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** JOEL AND ETHAN COEN
**CAST:** WILLIAM H. MACY, STEVE BUSCEMI, FRANCES MCDORMAND
**AWARDS:** TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (FRANCES MCDORMAND).

Jerry Lundegaard (William H. Macy), a desperate car salesman, wants his father-in-law to give him some money for his new business. And the only way to get the moolah is by staging his wife's kidnapping and sharing the ransom money with two goons whom he hires for the job. But at times even the best-laid plans go awry, and so does the kidnapping. Subsequently, the police chief, a seven-month pregnant Marge Gunderson (Frances McDormand), discovers two corpses on a highway. The police chief shrewdly begins to piece together the clues and doggedly pursues the suspects. Intelligent, compassionate and unperturbed, she brings to life an Oscar-winning portrait of a small-town policewoman who believes there's more to life than a little bit of money.

## ▶ FINDING NEMO

ANIMATION | 2003 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** ANDREW STANTON, LEE UNKRICH
**CAST:** VOICE OF ALBERT BROOKS, ALEXANDER GOULD

It's a big bad world out there, forewarns Dad Merlin (Albert Brooks), but the pesky little Nemo is unlikely to follow his father's sage advice. Like other friendly neighbourhood kids, he is bitten by the adventure bug and dreams of discovering what lies beyond. But Dad's words ring true when Nemo, the weak-finned clownfish, is snatched away from his deep-sea haven by a diver and imprisoned in a fish tank in Sydney. It's time for

AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ANIMATED FEATURE.

timid little Nemo to ferret out hidden reserves of courage and plan his escape with Gill (Willem Dafoe), his newfound buddy-in-captivity. And it's time for Dad Merlin to be brave too and set out into the distant seas in search of his son. Joining him in his search is his lively companion, the forgetful blue Royal Tang fish, Doris (Ellen DeGeneres), but the journey is fraught with danger. An exhilarating story on family values and the father-son bond, *Finding Nemo* raises animation to a new high.

## ▶ FORREST GUMP

DRAMA | 1994 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROBERT ZEMECKIS
CAST:
TOM HANKS, ROBIN WRIGHT PENN, SALLY FIELDS
AWARDS:
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (TOM HANKS).

*Forrest Gump* articulates the American dream in a novel way. The premise is simple: even a dimwit can be a hero and play a historic role in the good 'ole US as long as he is benevolent, benign and guileless. Gump is one such low-IQ hero who loves his mother (Sally Fields), loves his girlfriend (Robin Wright Penn), loves his nation and does his bit of nation-building by being present through all pivotal moments in American history from the '60s to the '80s. He's the guy who shows Elvis how to shake his hips; the soldier who saves American lives in Vietnam; the hero who shakes hands with JFK; the sprinter guru who runs through the length and breadth of America, showcasing the simple truth that nice guys do finish first. And he's the devoted lover who finds the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, after his girlfriend goes through the regular rebel-without-a-cause angst of the '70s. With Hanks in great form, this one is truly feel-good cinema.

## ▶ THE FRENCH CONNECTION

THRILLER | 1971 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
WILLIAM FRIEDKIN
CAST:
GENE HACKMAN, ROY SCHEIDER, FERNANDO REY
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTION, BEST ACTOR (GENE HACKMAN).

When it was released in 1971, *The French Connection* became one of the highest grossing films of the year and swept the Oscars, winning all major awards. And mostly because of the antics of the anti-hero, Popeye Doyle (Gene Hackman), a racist, neurotic, vicious and brutal NYC cop who has just one chance to redeem his failing career graph. He must bust the illegal drug racket that begins in Marseilles and ends in New York, involving a $32 million smuggled shipment of high-grade heroin. With its gritty chase sequences and unapologetic shoot-outs, this is one of the most hard-hitting, tell-it-like-it-is, cop capers of Hollywood.

## ▶ FRIDA

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JULIE TAYMOR

It's 1953. Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (Salma Hayek) is hosting her sole one-woman show at a gallery, but is too sick to attend the opening. Does Frida give in to her ailments? Never. She gets her bed lifted in a truck and carried to the gallery. That's the

CAST:
SALMA HAYEK, MIA MAESTRO, ALFRED MOLINA
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS.

diehard spirit that this biopic captures as it brings to life the unconventional musings of Frida who spent most of her life in agony, after a crippling accident that broke her spine, but her spirit remained undefeated. Frida's passion for life and love find expression in her dazzling artwork that showcased her alone, in solitary splendour, or with her lover, famous Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (Alfred Molina). *Frida* captures the extraordinary life of a woman who lived by her own rules and made her own definitions – of love, sex, fidelity and loyalty – in a man's world.

## ▶ FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

WAR | 1953 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
FRED ZINNEMAN
CAST:
BURT LANCASTER, MONTGOMERY CLIFF, DEBORAH KERR
AWARDS:
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

Private Prewitt (Montgomery Cliff) reports for duty in Oahu, Hawaii, just before D-Day and realizes that war is a larger-than-life drama than he'd ever imagined. Prewitt refuses to join the company's boxing team and ends up as the target of unremitting harassment, even as his Sergeant (Burt Lancaster) romances his commander's wife (Deborah Kerr) on the sun-kissed Hawaiian shores. Prewitt finds his mate in a club hostess (Donna Reed), but before romance can bloom, bombs explode, as the Japanese attack Oahu on December 7, 1941. A great war-epic, *From Here To Eternity* traces the life of an American soldier with finesse and drama.

## ▶ GANDHI

DRAMA | 1982 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH
CAST:
BEN KINGSLEY, CANDICE BERGEN, ROHINI HATTANGADY
AWARDS:
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (BEN KINGSLEY).

Hollywood's modern-day epic, *Gandhi*, catapulted India and the idea of India on the global stage more brilliantly than any politician could have done. Described as Richard Attenborough's labour of love, the biopic captures Mahatma Gandhi like never before. More importantly, it traverses through a vast canvas, beginning with Gandhi's early trysts with leadership in South Africa, and ends with his unique crusade against the British Raj, which ended in Swaraj. The heart and soul of *Gandhi* is Ben Kingsley who transforms Gandhi into a moral force, a visionary idea, even as he holds onto his intense humanism. History never got better and bolder on celluloid.

## ▶ GHOST

ROMANCE | 1990 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
JERRY ZUCKER
CAST:
DEMI MOORE, PATRICK SWAYZE, WHOOPI GOLDBERG
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS.

In *Ghost*, Sam Wheat (Patrick Swayze) and Molly Jensen (Demi Moore) are happily roller coasting through their Manhattan romance, till Sam falls prey to a mugging accident and Molly ends up alone with her potter's wheel and wet clay. Or so she thinks, but Molly isn't really alone. Her still-in-love investment-banker boyfriend returns as a ghost to protect her from his unscrupulous partner, Carl Bruner (Tony Goldwyn), who was behind his murder. And the only way he can communicate his

grief, fears and passion is through the medium of psychic Oda Mae Brown (Whoopi Goldberg). Catch the touchy-feely ghostly encounter between Swayze and Moore to the music of "Unchained Melody" and feel the passion flow.

## ▶ GIGI

ROMANCE | 1958 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
VINCENT MINNELLI
**CAST:**
LESLIE CARON, LOUIS JORDAN, MAURICE CHEVALIER
**AWARDS:**
NINE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

A musical, *Gigi* traces the friendship between a young, impoverished girl (Leslie Caron) and an older millionaire (Louis Jordan), set against the colourful backdrop of turn-of-the-century Paris. The friendship leads to romance but not before Gigi relives the Cinderella story with its attendant highs and lows.

## ▶ GIRL, INTERRUPTED

DRAMA | 1999 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JAMES MANGOLD
**CAST:**
WINONA RYDER, ANGELINA JOLIE, WHOOPI GOLDBERG, VANESSA REDGRAVE
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (ANGELINA JOLIE).

Powerhouse performances by Angelina Jolie, Winona Ryder and the rest of the *Interrupted* girls make for uninterrupted viewing. Set in the fast changing 1960s, *Girl, Interrupted* is the true story of Susanna Kaysen (Winona Ryder) who gets admitted in a renowned mental institution, after she tries to end her life for no ostensible reason. Just depression. In the institution, Susanna finds she's no longer alone. For society and its strange norms have thrown up misfits who survive on the fringes of existence. Susanna finds Daisy, victimised by her father, and Lisa Rowe (Angelina Jolie) who brightens up the dreary institution with her beatnik irreverence. Superficially, it's a nice world where Valium helps inmates to cope. But this world isn't real. In short, it isn't the world where girls belong, interrupted or uninterrupted. Moving stuff.

## ▶ GLADIATOR

ACTION | 2000 | ★★★★

A colossus of a film, *Gladiator* makes the Roman Empire hip and happening with its adrenalin-pumping battle scenes and high-

DIRECTION:
RIDLEY SCOTT
CAST:
RUSSELL CROWE, JOAQUIN PHOENIX, CONNIE NIELSON
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR(RUSSELL CROWE).

on-testosterone close combat sequences. Set in 180 A.D., the film traces the vengeance of Roman General Maximus (Russell Crowe), who escapes death at the hands of self-crowned Emperor Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix), and becomes an enslaved, enraged Gladiator, waiting for his final confrontation. In reality, Emperor Marcus Aurelius (Richard Harris) has made Maximus the crown-designate as he realizes his son, Commodus, would be a weak heir. But Commodus betrays and kills his father and also murders Maximus' family. He then thinks his troubles are over, but the General returns as the invincible Gladiator. Hailed as a sandal-and-sword epic, *Gladiator* celebrates valour and showcases Russell Crowe as the quintessential male conqueror: all brawn and brooding grandeur.

## ▶ GLORY

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
EDWARD ZWICK
CAST:
MATTHEW BRODERICK, DENZEL WASHINGTON
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (DENZEL WASHINGTON).

Colonel Robert Gould Shaw (Matthew Broderick) has a difficult task at hand. He is asked to lead the controversial Massachusetts 54th into battlefield during the American Civil War. This was the trial battalion set up by the US government, comprising African-American soldiers, most of them slaves, to see whether they could fight as patriotically as white soldiers. Colonel Shaw's troop has many angry, resentful soldiers, including Private Trip (Denzel Washington), who must first fight racial prejudices within the US Army before they can prove their credentials. *Glory* dramatically highlights the role of Blacks in the Civil War, most of which is wrongly dismissed as being marginal.

## ▶ THE GODFATHER

DRAMA | 1972 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION:
FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
CAST:
MARLON BRANDO, AL PACINO, DIANE KEATON, JAMES CAAN
AWARDS:
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST ACTOR (MARLON BRANDO).

Based on Mario Puzo's best-selling book, *The Godfather* traces the transfer of power from the ageing patriarch of an Italian Mafioso family that heads the American crime syndicate, to his reluctant son who inherits the mantle, despite being embroiled in violent gang wars. *The Godfather* has gone down in Hollywood's history as one of the best crime sagas with some of the most memorable lines in its soundtrack. Don Corleone (Marlon Brando) may be a ruthless gangster but his violence does not detract from his being a benevolent family man. Yet, when rivals try to usurp his power, he is forced to appoint his youngest and brightest son, Michael Corleone (Al Pacino), to protect the Corleone family's fortunes. The singular shot of a once genteel Michael swivelling arrogantly on his father's chair, after settling all bloody scores, is the stuff of classic cult cinema.

## ▶ THE GODFATHER: PART II

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
**CAST:**
AL PACINO, ROBERT DE NIRO, DIANE KEATON
**AWARDS:**
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

*The Godfather: Part II*, a sequel, contains a flashback into the journey of immigrant Vito Corleone through New York's violent underworld in the 1920s, before he became the undisputed mafia don. The film also documents his son Michael's attempts to expand the crime syndicate as its current head. Rarely do sequels live up to the original. *The Godfather: Part II* does, with powerhouse performances by Robert De Niro and Al Pacino as the two dons, Vito and Michael. While Vito's antecedents showcase the typical immigrant experience where crime becomes a means to ward off poverty, Michael's efforts to retain the undisputed supremacy of the Corleone family in the world of crime leaves him lonely at the top.

## ▶ GOLDEN COMPASS

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
CHRIS WEITZ
**CAST:**
NICOLE KIDMAN, DANIEL CRAIG, DAKOTA BLUE RICHARDS, FREDDIE HIGMORE
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST VISUAL EFFECTS.

Is it time for Harry Potter to take a bow 'coz there's a natty new girl on the block? Not really. Because, *Golden Compass* may have all the *masala* to awe and shock, with giant polar bears that talk, heavy-on-artillery Arctic battles and super girl heroine Lyra who knows answers to everything merely by reading her magical compass. But it doesn't have the brand equity of Pottermania. Lyra's adventures to safeguard free will and freedom of humans may be as grandiose as Potter's fight against Voldemort, but Lyra mania isn't as widespread as Potter mania. Nevertheless, *Golden Compass* is a worthy successor of the Potter formula, where a teen sets out to save the world with her magical powers. *Golden Compass* based on Philip Pullman's trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, has larger ethical overtones as it unleashes a debate on authority versus free will. Lyra, a strong-willed girl, defies the mysterious Ms. Kidman who wants to use her magical powers to master the multiple universes and signal the death of free will. Fleeing from her captor, she finds a comrade in a giant polar bear that leads her further in her crusade. Watch *Golden Compass* for its spectacle.

## ▶ GOLDFINGER

ACTION | 1964 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GUY HAMILTON
**CAST:**
SEAN CONNERY, GERT FROBE, HONOUR BLACKMAN
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

Is James Bond a man of style or a man of action? With *Goldfinger*, we settle the question. For Sean Connery effectively exhibits the various attributes of the super secret British agent. With some of the best one-liners and carefully orchestrated action cuts, *Goldfinger* proves that Agent 007 can kill, both by his wit and weapons. Here, Bond takes on the ingenious gold-addict, Auric Goldfinger (Gert Frobe), a bullion dealer, who wants to knock down Fort Knox. And the only man who can stop him from fulfilling his devious plan is Bond who must battle Oddjob (Harold Sakata), the deadly henchman, who kills with

his Frisbee-like bowler. Watch Bond stare death in the face, without batting an eyelid. Undoubtedly, *Goldfinger* represents the golden era (1960s) of the Bond franchise.

## ▶ GONE WITH THE WIND

DRAMA | 1939 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
VICTOR FLEMING
**CAST:**
CLARK GABLE, VIVIEN LEIGH
**AWARDS:**
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (VIVIEN LEIGH), BEST FILM AND BEST DIRECTOR.

Based on Margaret Mitchell's cult romantic epic, the film is epical too. It stands out for its characterization and the wide sweep of its canvas that covers the passing of an entire era in American history. Set against the Civil War, *Gone With The Wind* traces the wild and stormy relationship between pulp fiction's best-loved lovers, Scarlett O'Hara (Vivien Leigh) and Rhett Butler (Clark Gable). As the war ravages her family, fortunes and dreams, feisty Scarlett tries to survive without losing her self-respect and arrogance. And the only man who understands her bravery is one who irks her the most: haughty gadfly Rhett Butler. But before Scarlett can decode the love-hate conundrum, it's too late. The genteel South has slipped away into a new materialistic world order and Rhett has simply got tired of waiting. But Scarlett signs off with her legendary optimism: "Tomorrow is another day." Till today, she remains the most popular firebrand of cult cinema.

## ▶ GOOD WILL HUNTING

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GUS VAN SANT
**CAST:**
MATT DAMON, ROBIN WILLIAMS, BEN AFFLECK, MINNIE DRIVER
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (ROBIN WILLIAMS).

Sean Maguire (Robin Williams), a world-weary psychologist, bails out young Will Hunting (Matt Damon) from the dregs of society and helps him develop his skills. His genius that had been suppressed by years of abuse and oppression is recognized. Will is the archetypal angry young man, a janitor at MIT, who solves complicated theorems on blackboard when no one is looking. When his talent is discovered, it is almost too late, for our mathematical genius is in jail for assaulting a policeman. After his release, and some aborted therapy sessions, he ends up under the benign tutelage of Prof. Sean Maguire and discovers friendship, love and a normal life. *Good Will Hunting* is an uplifting tale of acceptance and growth, where the focus is on identity, self-esteem and a whole lot of good will that forms the bulwark of civilized society.

## ▶ THE GRADUATE

DRAMA | 1967 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MIKE NICHOLS
**CAST:**
DUSTIN HOFFMAN, ANNE BANCROFT, KATHERINE ROSS

*The Graduate* may not be a typical teenage coming-of-age film, yet its concerns are easily recognizable. Ben Braddock's graduation party is quite typical as are his post-graduate fumblings with sex and the future: he is completely unsure about both. While dropping Mrs. Robinson (Anne Bancroft), the wife of his father's business partner, home after the party, he finds

**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST DIRECTOR.

himself being seduced into a wild sexual relationship with her. Initially, he views it as a rebellion against his parents' affluent, upper-middle class conformism. But when he encounters Elaine, Mrs. Robinson's daughter, he realizes that sexual liberation can hardly be a substitute for love. Peppered with some of the best songs by Simon & Garfunkel, *The Graduate* catapulted the young Dustin Hoffman to instant stardom.

## ▶ THE GRAPES OF WRATH

DRAMA | 1940 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN FORD
**CAST:**
HENRY FONDA, JANE DARWELL
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR.

Based on John Steinbeck's Pulitzer-winning novel, *The Grapes Of Wrath*, this film is a moving testament to the heroic human spirit. It captures the travails of the Joad family who travels to California, the land of plenty, after losing their source of livelihood during the Great Depression. The film traces the metamorphosis of a sharecropper's son, Tom Joad (Henry Fonda), from a bar room brawler and lawbreaker to a diehard union leader. His family tries to fight for survival in poverty-ridden California, after being forced to migrate from their land in the Midwest. A strong social document of the great divide between haves and have-nots, *The Grapes Of Wrath* remains topical even today in a world where there are still "one, two, three guys with a million acres and a hundred thousand starving farmers". Even today, the world awaits Tom who promised his ma in his memorable farewell speech, "Wherever you can look, wherever there's a fight, so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever there's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there...."

## ▶ THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

DRAMA | 1952 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
CECIL B. DEMILLE
**CAST:**
BETTY HUTTON, CHARLTON HUSTON, CORNEL WILDE
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

*The Greatest Show On Earth* is a love triangle, set against the backdrop of a circus, with director Cecil B. DeMille resorting to melodrama and cheesy comedy to get the show cracking. Tough guy Charlton Huston plays Brad, the circus manager, who has two women desperately vying for his attention, while all he's interested in is saving his circus and making it the greatest show on earth. Loads of animals, clowns and trapeze artists try and kick up some drama, but critics have claimed this is the worst film that won the Oscar, especially in a year that boasted of great films like *High Noon, Singin' In The Rain* and *The Quiet Man*.

## ▶ GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

DRAMA | 1967 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STANLEY KRAMER

Inter-racial marriages weren't common in the 1960s in America. In fact, they had just been legalized in 50 states during the shooting of *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner*. This enhances the film's importance as it traces the subconscious bias against the

CAST:
SIDNEY POITIER, SPENCER TRACY, KATHARINE HEPBURN
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (KATHARINE HEPBURN).

blacks in so-called liberal America. Matt and Christina Drayton (Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn), an upmarket, educated couple, are shocked when their daughter (Katharine Houghton) brings a guest, Dr. John Wade Prentice (Sidney Poitier), for dinner and declares that she's going to marry him. "It never occurred to me that I would fall in love with a Negro, but I have and nothing's going to change that," she tells them bluntly. But centuries of bias don't break on a dinner table and the family faces its share of moral dilemmas before it clears the cobwebs of history. Riveting stuff.

## ▶ HAMLET

DRAMA | 1948 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
LAURENCE OLIVIER
CAST:
LAURENCE OLIVIER, JEAN SIMMONS
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR (LAURENCE OLIVIER).

Undoubtedly, one of the best celluloid adaptations of Shakespeare, *Hamlet* is essentially a labour of love by one of Hollywood's greatest actors. Laurence Olivier plays the eponymous Prince of Denmark who sets out to avenge his father's death and showcases a hero weighed down by the tragedy of power, deceit and indecisiveness. Olivier's Hamlet is essentially a hero damned by lack of resolution, as described in his famous lament: "To be or not to be, that is the question."

## ▶ HANNAH AND HER SISTERS

DRAMA | 1986 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
WOODY ALLEN
CAST:
WOODY ALLEN, MIA FARROW, BARBARA HERSHEY, DIANE WIEST, MICHAEL CAINE
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS.

Woody Allen doesn't make movies alone. He uses celluloid as philosophical treatises, expounding his theories on love, sex, marriage, death, music, religion, identity, Freud, life, God ... In *Hannah And Her Sisters* the story is irrelevant, the script is more important, as are the quirky relationships. In the film, we have three sisters, led by the eponymous Hannah (Mia Farrow). Ironically, the men in Hannah's life seem to have more feelings for her sisters than for her. While Hannah's current husband (Michael Caine) nurtures a secret desire for her sister, Lee (Barbara Hershey), her ex-husband (Woody Allen) is drawn towards the other sister, Holy (Diane Wiest). Most of the comedy arises from the musings of Woody Allen who plays a hypochondriac, trying to deal with his fictitious brain tumour with all kinds of hocus-focus. A witty satire on suburban blues, *Hannah And Her Sisters* is quintessential Woody Allen fare.

## ▶ HAPPY FEET

ANIMATION | 2006 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
GEORGE MILLER

Sweet and smart, the film's familiar theme of 'belonging' fills you with a sense of familiarity. It's the message about finding your identity and conserving the planet that makes *Happy Feet*

**CAST:**
VOICE OF ROBIN WILLIAMS, HUGH JACKMAN, NICOLE KIDMAN, ELIJAH WOOD
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ANIMATED FEATURE.

so engrossing. There are some stunning visuals in this tale of an oddball penguin that tries to find his destiny in the cold Artic regions. Mumble isn't like the rest of his colony. He can't sing, even though he can feel a million songs in his heart. But he can dance. And dancing is seen as a handicap in a world of strange webbed feet. So Mumble must find his friends — a bunch of shorter, more stubby penguins– and seek *gyan* at the feet of the weird Penguin Guru (Robin Williams). He does this even as he fights off killer seals and predatory birds that have a predilection for penguin sausage. Add to this the strange breed of aliens who are drawing out all the fish from the ocean and threatening the bird colony with a food crisis, and you have a story that's happy yet sad, kiddish yet adult. And no prizes for guessing who the wicked aliens are.

## ▶ HIGH NOON

WESTERN | 1957 | ★★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
FRED ZINNEMANN
**CAST:**
CARY GRANT, GRACE KELLY
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (CARY GRANT) AND BEST DIRECTOR.

It is a monumental day for ageing sheriff Will Kane (Cary Grant) for he is giving up his tin star after marrying his young and beautiful girlfriend, Amy Fowler (Grace Kelly). But before Kane can walk into peaceful retirement, there is a task that he needs to accomplish. He wants to protect his town from a gangster who has been freed from prison after Kane sent him there as a lifer. And Kane must do it alone since the townsmen refuse to join him. It's a simple, stark and stunning show of valour, with Cary Grant pitching in a scintillating performance as a moral, upright marshal who knows he must fight back, even if alone, against evil. Easy to see where *Sholay* came from.

## ▶ THE HOURS

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
STEPHEN DALDRY
**CAST:**
NICOLE KIDMAN, JULIANNE MOORE, MERYL STREEP, ED HARRIS
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (NICOLE KIDMAN).

Based on a novel by Michael Cunninghman, *The Hours* traces the influence of Virginia Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1923), on the lives of three women, living in different time periods. While the first woman is Virginia Woolf herself, captured in the 1920s, as she tries to sculpt her fictional heroine onto paper, the second character is Laura Brown (Julianne Moore), a lonely, depressed, post-war housewife, who looks for a reason to continue living in Los Angeles in the 1950s. The third episode deals with a modern-day Mrs. Dalloway, Clarissa Vaughn (Meryl Streep), who is trying to organize a party for her terminally ill ex-husband in New York City, 2001. Suicide is the underlying theme that binds the three women. They look for meaning beyond the superficialities of life and refuse to be victims of sexual and economic repression. *The Hours* is a must for aficionados of works of Virginia Woolf. And for Nicole Kidman's fans too.

## ▶ HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY

DRAMA | 1941 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN FORD
**CAST:**
WALTER PIDGEON, MAUREEN O'HARA
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

Shifting gears from the westerns he loved, John Ford made *How Green Was My Valley* as a heartwarming tribute to the heroism and resilience of the ordinary American. Set in a small mining town, the film trapezes through the highs and lows of life as it captures the angst of the protagonist, Huw Norgan, who narrates his story in flashback. An old man, he is leaving his Welsh town. With time, the happy and hardworking mining community has fallen prey to the unbridled pace of development and the changing face of labour. Consequently, young men migrate for better options while old men flounder in poverty. What stands out is the innate goodness of the down-and-out yet dignified souls who constitute the moral fabric of the place.

## ▶ HOWARDS END

DRAMA | 1992 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JAMES IVORY
**CAST:**
ANTHONY HOPKINS, VANESSA REDGRAVE, HELENA BONHAM CARTER, EMMA THOMPSON, JOSEPH BENNETT
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (EMMA THOMPSON).

Howards End is a rambling mansion in the English countryside that belongs to the Wilcox family and becomes a silent witness to its dramatic relationship with the Schlegel family. The two families are representative of a set of polarized norms that characterized society in the early 20th century. While the traditional Wilcox are archetypal snobbish English gentry, headed by Henry (Anthony Hopkins) and his genteel wife (Vanessa Redgrave), the Schlegel siblings – Emma Thompson, Helena Bonhan Carter, Adrian Ross-Magenty – are liberated and more humane. *Howards End* is based on E.M. Forster's novel, adapted for the screen by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. The film is a delicate study of love in unexpressive times, where graceful Emma Thompson is drawn towards the uptight senior Wilcox, and feisty Helena Bonham Carter is attracted towards his son (Joseph Bennett). This period film's highpoint is its atmosphere.

## ▶ IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT

DRAMA | 1967 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
NORMAN JEWISON
**CAST:**
SIDNEY POITIER, ROD STEIGER, LEE GRANT
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (ROD STEIGER) AND BEST PICTURE.

A racist white Police Chief, Bill Gillespie (Rod Steiger), asks a black homicide detective, Virgil Tibbs (Sidney Poitier), to solve a local murder in a small Missouri town that has a pronounced white population. The blacks are expected to lead their lives here as invisible, undemanding souls. *In The Heat Of The Night* shows the coming together of two unlikely people, as Steiger tries to fight his prejudices and Poitier stands up to racial hatred and bias, upholding the inviolate spirit of equality.

## ▶ THE INCREDIBLES

ANIMATION | 2004 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
BRAD BIRD
**CAST:**
CRAIG T. NELSON, HOLLY HUNTER, SAMUEL L. JACKSON
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ANIMATED FEATURE.

Incredible animation and super fun: here's perfect family fun. In *The Incredibles*, you first get to see a new superhero that isn't Superman or Batman. Second, you get to see a whole family of them: Mr. Incredible who cannot be surpassed in strength, Elastigirl who stretches even beyond your imagination and a bunch of Superkids who can save both themselves and the world. The family, Incredibles, is forced to lead a normal life due to a new law that forces superheroes to blend in with society. But the family is forced to unleash its superpowers when the First World is threatened by a bandit who dreams of world domination and unleashes a manic robot. Loads of special effects and great action sequences: go get your thrills.

## ▶ INDEPENDENCE DAY

ACTION | 1996 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ROLAND EMMERICH
**CAST:**
WILL SMITH, BILL PULLMAN, JEFF GOLDBLUM
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

A perfect popcorn flick, *Independence Day* scores because of its super-special effects. These include blowing up the White House and the Empire State Building by a bunch of power-hungry aliens who have Armageddon on their agenda. Even as the harried US President (Bill Pullman) promises the world a special show of fireworks on July 4, where the Earthlings hope to destroy the aliens, it is left to two guys to save the world. These are computer geek David Levison (Jeff Goldblum) and maverick pilot Steven Hiller (Will Smith) who have nothing on their side but sheer grit. Uncle Sam shows off his super power, and how!

## ▶ IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT

ROMANCE | 1934 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
FRANK CAPRA
**CAST:**
CLARK GABLE, CLAUDETTE CAULBERT
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING

A spoilt runaway heiress (Claudette Caulbert) meets an out-of-work journalist (Clark Gable) on a bus ride from Florida to New York. Sparks fly. The mismatched two start by detesting each other but end up desperately in love. Back home, we have seen *Dil Hai Ki Manta Nahin* made in the same vein. The heart has its own reasons and romance never gets outdated, despite being

BEST ACTOR (CLARK GABLE), BEST ACTRESS (CLAUDETTE CAULBERT), BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE.

formulaic and super-saccharine candyfloss. *It Happened One Night*, Frank Capra's sweetest film, is enlivened by some crackling chemistry between a sardonic Clark and a saucy Claudette.

## ▶ JERRY MAGUIRE

ROMANCE | 1996 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
CAMERON CROWE
**CAST:**
TOM CRUISE, RENEE ZELLWEGER, CUBA GOODING JR.
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (CUBA GOODING JR.).

Jerry Maguire (Tom Cruise) isn't a perfect man and Dorothy Boyd (Renee Zellweger) isn't the hottest woman around. On the contrary, Jerry is self-centred, aggressive, ambitious and seems to have a commitment phobia while Dorothy is homely, almost invisible, and a single mother. But Jerry is a sports agent who stands up for ethics and insists on the importance of people. But when he is fired for his principles, Dorothy is the lone colleague who walks out with him – with his goldfish. Jerry and Dorothy not only have to start their business from scratch but also have to find equilibrium in their messed-up personal lives. The beginning of a bond that is heartwarming and full of soul...*Jerry Maguire* is romance at its unconventional best.

## ▶ JUNO

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JASON REITMAN
**CAST:**
ELLEN PAGE, MICHAEL CERA, JENNIFER GARNER
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

*Juno* tackles a tangled topic – teen pregnancy – without getting tied down into knots. It scores in its no-nonsense approach. Sixteen-year-old Juno MacGuff (Ellen Page) loses her virginity to high-school buddy Paulie Bleeker (Michael Cera) and becomes pregnant. She tells her parents about it and decides to go through the pregnancy and give up her baby for adoption. Her dad helps her find a suitable couple (Jennifer Garner and Jason Bateman) and life goes on normally. Juno feels left out when she's not invited to the prom, but finds a dance partner in the foster dad. But it's the real dad, Paulie, whom she loves even though, like her, he's gawky and immature. And it's the sheer gawkiness of this no-holds-barred film that makes it a winner. *Juno* neither celebrates nor condemns teen pregnancy but treats it as life's reality that needs to be sensitively handled. The youthful idiom, deftly created through the language and attitude of Juno and her friends, makes the film a mirror of its times.

## ▶ JURASSIC PARK

SCI-FI | 1993 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:**
SAM NEILL, LAURA DERN, JEFF GOLDBLUM,

Don't play with nature, says Steven Spielberg in this super shocker that redefines the science of special effects. 'Larger-than-life' acquires a whole new meaning in *Jurassic Park* as T-Rex chomps and seems to thrust his jaws in your very face. It wants to make you creep through this hi-tech theme park where an

RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS.

eccentric millionaire (Richard Attenborough) brings to life his fantasies about a long-forgotten past by cloning dinosaurs. It could have been an idyllic opening for this prehistoric phantasmagoria, but for the security breach that has hungry carnivores rushing into all the wrong places. They then feast on humans who were misguided enough to think they were masters of all creatures, big and small.

## ▶ THE KING AND I

DRAMA | 1956 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
WALTER LANG
CAST:
DEBORRAH KERR, YUL BRYNNER
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (YUL BRYNNER).

It's Siam (now, Thailand), and the year is 1862. A widowed Anna (Deborrah Kerr), in humongous hoopskirts, arrives in the royal palace as a schoolteacher to tutor the king's countless children. Soon, she ends up as the arrogant King's confidante and advisor, even tutoring him in statecraft as the British greedily eye his prosperous Kingdom and dream of converting it into a protectorate. A musical, *The King And I* stormed Broadway in the 1950s. The film scores with Yul Brynner's memorable performance as the King of Siam. Brynner reportedly went bald for the film and for his record-shattering 4,000 stage performances.

## ▶ KING KONG

ACTION | 2005 | ★★★★½

DIRECTION:
PETER JACKSON
CAST:
NAOMI WATTS, ADRIEN BRODY, JACK BURNS AND THE GR-GR- GORILLA
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS.

After his artistic trilogy on *Lord Of The Rings*, Peter Jackson switches gear in *King Kong* and goes commercial. He picks up the 1933 film and re-fuels it with an energy that is pure 21st century pop art. If movie making is about spectacle, spectacle is what you'll get, decides the director – and no apologies for that. Once the motley crew of down-and-out performers (a filmmaker who wants to make his million-dollar movie, an actress who is desperate for a role, a playwright who is desperately in love) reaches Skull Island, the monster show is relentless. The thrill quotient reaches breaking point as King Kong battles dinosaurs and humans ward off giant squids, tarantulas, spiders, bats and what-you-will. And when he puts the god-knows-how-many-pounds gorilla in New York, it's magnified Manhattan mayhem with moments of tender mush as the wisp of a girl tries to comfort a wailing monster. *King Kong* is the monster of all make-believe movie lore. You can't get bigger, beastly and more bratty than this when it comes to showbiz.

## ▶ KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

DRAMA | 1985 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
HECTOR BARBENCO
CAST:
WILLIAM HURT, RAUL

Two polarized prison inmates move from animosity to friendship in *Kiss Of The Spider Woman*, a gritty tale of human bonding. Luis (William Hurt), a sex offender, is a homosexual who spends his time spilling escapist yarns about a spider

JULIA, SONIA BRAGA
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (WILLIAM HURT).

woman (Sonia Braga) and a Nazi crime thriller: memories of old melodramas he had seen. His cellmate, Valentin (Raul Julia), is a hardcore political prisoner who fails to understand Luis' behaviour and views him with utter contempt. But the contempt soon fades and prejudices fall in this engrossing tale of intimacy and betrayal.

## ▶ KLUTE

DRAMA | 1972 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
ALAN J. PAKULA
CAST:
JANE FONDA, DONALD SUTHERLAND, ROY SCHEIDER
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (JANE FONDA).

Private eye John Klute (Donald Sutherland) befriends New York hooker Bree Daniels (Jane Fonda) to find out the whereabouts of his missing friend. Daniels is determined to turn her back to her old life and become an actress, but there's trouble ahead. One of her clients seem to be mysteriously stalking her. And the only man she can depend on is Klute, a silent and dignified cop, who might just be able to save her from the midnight prowler. A thrilling account of urban paranoia, *Klute* is an unusual love story.

## ▶ KRAMER VS. KRAMER

DRAMA | 1974 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROBERT BENTON
CAST:
DUSTIN HOFFMAN, MERYL STREEP
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR (DUSTIN HOFFMAN).

And we always thought that kids couldn't cope without their moms. *Kramer Vs. Kramer* became a blockbuster simply because it pointed out poignantly that dads too are indispensable. And, sometimes, when it comes to making a choice, dad could rate higher than mom in the kid's preference. The film's singular appeal lies in the stumbling growth of workaholic Ted Kramer (Dustin Hoffman) towards parenthood, after he wakes up one night to find his neglected wife, Joanna (Meryl Streep), has walked out on him and their young son. Ted fumbles his way through his single parent status and balances his demanding professional commitment with preparing French toast for his son and reading bedtime stories to him. So much so, that the two don't want to separate when mom wants her son back. *Kramer Vs. Kramer* is sweet and sentimental, with some great performances by Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep.

## ▶ L.A. CONFIDENTIAL

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
CURTIS HANSON
CAST:
KEVIN SPACEY, RUSSEL CROWE, GUY PEARCE, KIM BASINGER
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS.

*L.A. Confidential* belongs to the director solely, for Curtis Hanson creates celluloid gold out of James Ellroy's novel about the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) blues. With a cast of fine actors, and a style that is reminiscent of the noir-ish '50s, Hanson takes a hard look at tensions within the LAPD and the bustling city with its high-powered people. *L.A. Confidential* follows the misfortunes of three Los Angeles cops as they try to trace the link between various murders. Adding spice to the proceedings are the diverse working styles of the three cops.

Jack Vincennes (Kevin Spacey), who works as a part-time advisor to *Hush-Hush* magazine, is an easy-going cop who operates in the realm of moral ambiguity. Bud White (Russell Crowe), a conscientious daredevil, hates violence against women and Ed Exley (Guy Pearce), the department's blue-eyed cop, who works strictly in accordance with rules and, predictably, brushes people the wrong way. Throw in a series of unprecedented events – a police riot, a decomposed body in a basement, a dangerous liaison – plus a sensitive eye for detail and *L.A. Confidential* ends up as perfect crime drama.

## ▶ THE LAST EMPEROR

DRAMA | 1987 | ★★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
BERNADO BERTOLUCCI
**CAST:**
JOHN LONE, JOAN CHEN, PETER O'TOOLE
**AWARDS:**
NINE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

He was venerated as Lord Of Ten Thousand Years, yet he was history's biggest figurative head who had no power and ruled over nothing. Bernado Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* is a masterpiece because it juxtaposes this nothingness against the opulence of the legendary Chinese Dragon Throne. It also captures the death of an era – Imperialism – even as another is born – Communism. The tragedy of China's Last Emperor, Pu-Yi (John Lone), resonates through the very crevices of the Forbidden City. Pu-Yi ascends the throne at three, abdicates it at seven and remains a prisoner throughout his life. First, his childhood is held ransom by the binds of royalty. Later, he ends up as a captive in a Communist re-education camp. Finally, he finds happiness as a lowly gardener in Peking. *The Last Emperor* is an epic study of the vagaries of history.

## ▶ THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

DRAMA | 2006 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
KEVIN MACDONALD
**CAST:**
FOREST WHITAKER, JAMES MCAVOY, KERRY WASHINGTON

*The Last King Of Scotland* is a must-see, simply because it brought Forest Whitaker a well-deserved Oscar for Best Actor. For Whitaker brings to his role a depth, a mix of madness and normalcy, that brings to life the character of the Ugandan dictator, Idi Amin. And there's an almost flawless performance by James McAvoy as the Scotsman who ends up being the dictator's personal physician, earning the title of being Idi

**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (FOREST WHITAKER).

Amin's pet white monkey. As Nicholas Garrigan, a wide-eyed youngster, who begins with dreams in his eyes and ends up with fear of death – a man trapped by a monster – McAvoy is marvellous. Most of the drama springs from the tumultuous rule of Idi Amin that ended with almost 3,00,000 Ugandans dead, murdered or ravaged. Based on the book by Giles Foden, events unfold through the eyes of the Scotsman who tries his best to believe in the goodness of the black man who stood up against British imperialism. But soon, his godfather becomes a monster who knows that to stay in power, he has to kill and kill some more. So what if he has to chop his wife to send the right message to his people? It's a stomach churning account of the political events of the 1970s, with the film moving at the pace of a thriller.

## ▶ LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

DRAMA | 1962 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
DAVID LEAN
**CAST:**
PETER O'TOOLE, OMAR SHARIF, ALEC GUINNESS, ANTHONY QUINN
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

This epic film is an account of the conflicting loyalties plaguing British military officer, T.E. Lawrence, during World War I when he is commissioned to help Arabs fight Turks. David Lean's *Lawrence Of Arabia* remains topical even today, with its philosophical documentation of the clash of cultures between the Orient and the Occident. Sent by his government to help Arabs, Lawrence (Peter O'Toole) begins to question British imperialism because, as he declares, his loyalty is with Britain and with "other" things, namely, the essential liberty and equality of all mankind. Small wonder then, Lawrence's biggest ally is the renegade Arab, Sherif Ali (Omar Sharif), who stands by him as bullets fly and cannon shells burst in the hostile desert terrain. Peter O'Toole's arresting performance, gripping screenplay and spectacular cinematography make this a classic movie.

## ▶ LEAVING LAS VEGAS

ROMANCE | 1995 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MIKE FIGGIS
**CAST:**
NICHOLAS CAGE, ELIZABETH SHUE
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (NICHOLAS CAGE).

*Leaving Las Vegas* is an intense and painful account of a film executive (Nicholas Cage) who loses his job in LA, takes his last pay to Las Vegas, hires a pokey hotel room and decides to drink himself to death. In between his drunken bouts, he finds a gentle prostitute (Elizabeth Shue) and hires her for a bit of companionship. His only condition: she shouldn't ask him to stop drinking. The clandestine relationship soon develops into a deeper affair, and the ill-fated lovers script a poignant love story, with death staring them in the face. Ironically, *Leaving Las Vegas* is based on a book by John O'Brien who shot himself before the movie was released.

## ▶ LEGENDS OF THE FALL

DRAMA | 1994 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
EDWARD ZWICK
CAST:
ANTHONY HOPKINS, BRAD PITT, AIDAN QUINN, JULIA ORMOND
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

A sprawling epic on the fluctuating fortunes of the Ludlow family, set against the backdrop of World War I, *Legends Of The Fall* showcases Brad Pitt in one of his most memorable roles. Also, the film sweeps you off your feet with its magical frames and camera artistry. Colonel Ludlow (Anthony Hopkins) has retired to his desolate family ranch and wants to live peacefully with his three sons, Alfred (Aidan Quinn), Tristan (Brad Pitt) and Samuel (Henry Thomas). The arrival of a young woman, Susannah (Julia Ormond), unleashes strange undercurrents within the family. It changes the equations forever, as the close-knit family tries to cope with changing times. Unforgettable fare.

## ▶ LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA

DRAMA | 2006 | ★★★

DIRECTION:
CLINT EASTWOOD
CAST:
KEN WATANBE, KAZUNARI NINOMIYA
AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

Clint Eastwood is fast emerging as one of the most serious directors of Hollywood. Ever since *Unforgiven*, the actor-director has proved his forte with meaningful cinema. In *Letters From Iwo Jima*, a sequel to his earlier film *Flags of Our Fathers*, Eastwood approaches the same events of World War II from the other side. If the first film showcased heroics of the American soldiers who fought a fierce battle in the island of Iwo Jima against the Japanese, the second film lays bare the anguish and heroism of Japanese soldiers who were fighting a losing battle under expedient conditions. The film has a global perspective that exposes the futility of war. *Letters From Iwo Jima* is in Japanese, with subtitles, and the Americans are shown either in flashback or as a Prisoner Of War who is treated with warmth by his enemies. Even Ken Watanbe as General Kuribayashi, who heads the Japanese regiment, is a humane pacifist who sorrowfully watches his soldiers die and reminisces of his earlier amiable encounters with Americans, when he believed Americans and Japanese were natural allies rather than enemies.

## ▶ LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL

DRAMA | 1997 | ★★★★★

DIRECTION:
ROBERTO BENIGNI
CAST:
ROBERTO BENIGNI, NICOLETTA BRASCHI, GIORGIO CANTARINI
AWARDS:
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR.

*Life Is Beautiful*, a simple and lyrical film about war and death during the Holocaust, is inspired by a real-life quote. Benigni decided to make a movie about fascist Italy after he had read Trotsky's account about his encounter with death when he lay on a bunker, waiting for Stalin's hit men to kill him. In that moment of terror, Trotsky had written that he still thought, "life is beautiful". Benigni took these lines to look at the anti-Semitic movement in Italy during World War II. The story about love and life is woven around Guido, a waiter, who falls in love with Dora, a beautiful schoolteacher, and woos her with a fairy tale romance. But the idyll is short-lived as Guido and his son end up

in an infamous concentration camp. There, in the midst of death and decay, Guido tries to extend the fairy tale by protecting his innocent child from the horrors of war. *Life Is Beautiful* works like poetry, fluid and fine, with a strong anti-war statement.

## ▶ THE LION IN WINTER

DRAMA | 1968 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:** ANTHONY HARVEY
**CAST:** PETER O'TOOLE, KATHARINE HEPBURN, ANTHONY HOPKINS
**AWARDS:** THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (KATHARINE HEPBURN).

The Machiavellian moves of the British monarchy influenced several films in the 1970s. *The Lion In Winter* is one such period drama that throws light on the turmoil within the castle when King Henry II (Peter O'Toole) is forced to choose an heir for the throne of England, now that he's approaching the end of his reign. But who does he chose from among his three sons: Richard the Lionheart (Anthony Hopkins), Geoffrey (John Castle), a scheming traitor, or John (Nigel Terry), a dimwit, who is his favourite. The trouble seems to have been compounded because of the king's growing estrangement with his wife, Eleanor (Katharine Hepburn).

## ▶ LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE

DRAMA | 2006 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:** JONATHAN DAYTON, VALERIE FARIS
**CAST:** GREG KINNEAR, TONI COLLETE, ABIGAIL BRESLIN
**AWARDS:** THREE OSCARS.

Though families may be dysfunctional, yet they are the only functional units amidst all the breaking social institutions around us. *Little Miss Sunshine* serenades the family, family values and family foibles all over again. Little Miss Abigail (nominated for Best Supporting Actress) doesn't want to be a loser because her dad (Greg Kinnear) simply hates losers. So she enters a beauty pageant for kids and ends up carrying her weird family – a brother who's taken a vow of silence, a grandfather on drugs, a suicidal uncle, a success-obsessed dad, harried mom – all the way to California. But the road trip turns out to be a perfect therapy for the family that ends up singing, dancing and standing up for each other. More important, they learn the most important lesson of life: one that states there are no losers. Everyone is a winner, as long as he/she does what he loves best. Now that's a sweet, sunshiny message in a sweet, sunshiny film.

## ▶ LORD OF THE RING: RETURN OF THE KING

DRAMA | 2003 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:** PETER JACKSON
**CAST:** VIGGO MORTENSEN, IAN MCKELLEN, ELIJAH WOOD, LIV TYLER

J. R. R. Tolkien's epical clash between good and evil – almost biblical in intent – ends with *Lord Of The Ring: Return Of The King*. Director Peter Jackson skillfully uses New Zealand's rare beauty to create the mystique of Middle Earth. Imaginatively, he creates a whole range of living species – hobbits, elves, orgs and wizards. Hobbits Frodo Baggins and Sam must save the human race or else ... The director almost hijacks you and throws you

**AWARDS:**
ELEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

into the vortex of a battlefield where survival depends on individual valour. Or else, you find yourself on the edge of a precipice with Frodo, trying to find out who the traitor is – co-Hobbit Sam or crazy Gollum. The Trilogy ends with the battle before Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) becomes king and the Age of Man begins. Sauron's forces have attacked Gondor's capital in his final siege against mankind. Gandalf desperately tries to re-establish the equilibrium of Middle Earth, to coronate Aragorn as King, and to give Frodo a chance to complete his quest by returning the Ring. While travelling across treacherous enemy terrain, Frodo must rely increasingly on Sam and Gollum as the Ring continues to test his allegiance and, ultimately, his humanity. Not to be missed.

## ▶ LOST IN TRANSLATION

DRAMA | 2003 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
SOFIA COPPOLA
**CAST:**
SCARLETT JOHANSSON, BILL MURRAY
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

A bittersweet comedy about a jetlagged middle-aged movie star (Bill Murray) and a 20-something (Scarlett Johansson) who's lonely despite being recently married, *Lost In Translation* is a directorial debut by Sofia Coppola. Completely devoid of all Hollywood clichés, the film traces the tentative bonding of these two unusual people in the unfamiliar environs of Tokyo, where both protagonists are literally and metaphorically lost. While Bob, the movie star, has lost his muse and is struggling with a career downswing, Charlotte, the young girl, neglected by her husband, is seeking out her identity in a relationship that seems to be going nowhere. Warm, witty and absolutely unconventional, the film re-invents the man-woman relationship.

## ▶ MARTY

DRAMA | 1955 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
DELBERT MANN
**CAST:**
ERNEST BORGNINE, BETSY BLAIR

Can an unassuming, shy butcher, living in the Bronx, go get a life? He can if he's Marty (Ernest Borgnine) who not only manages to change his life for the better – and find love too – but also ends up as a hero for all small, ordinary fellas who have neither the looks nor the money to make it big. All they have is

**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR AND BEST ACTOR (ERNEST BORGNINE).

Marty's brand of decency coupled with courage to dream big. *Marty*, a quiet film about an unconventional hero, is refreshingly different from loud and bombastic Hollywood films.

## ▶ MASTER AND COMMANDER: THE FAR SIDE OF THE WORLD

DRAMA | 2003 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PETER WEIR
**CAST:**
RUSSELL CROWE, PAUL BETTANY
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

Though *Master And Commander: The Far Side of The World* may be set in 1806, its lessons are meant for circa 2000, a century when leadership is being redefined. The film is essentially a study of leadership and its dilemmas, even as Russell Crowe's character becomes a DNA profile of masters, commanders, presidents, prime ministers, corporate czars and management honchos. Commanders need to be kind yet cruel; they need to blend head with heart; their ethics lie in balancing victory with values. How? This is shown through the heroics of Captain Jack Aubrey (Russell Crowe) who has been sent on a special mission by the King of England during the Napoleonic Wars. The Captain who commands the British Frigate, *H.M.S. Surprise*, must sink, burn or capture the French frigate, Acheron, that has been sinking ships off the coast of South America. But before that, he must motivate his crew, nip a mutiny, take care of the wounded, ensure the safety of the maximum number of people and engage in a debate with his best friend and sea mate, Paul Bettany, who believes that power almost always corrupts. More than the visual splendour, it is the character studies that grab your attention.

## ▶ THE MATRIX

SCI-FI | 1999 | ★★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
LARRY AND ANDY WACHOWSKI
**CAST:**
KEANU REEVES, LAURENCE FISHBURNE, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS.

If a filmmaker can take complex hi-tech terms like Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence, make them cogent fare, and keep the technologically challenged viewer rapt, he has achieved a marvel. And with its innovative blend of philosophy, science and drama, *The Matrix* is that marvel. Not forgetting its amazing special effects that make an art out of action. The film dwells on the age-old conflict between the physical world that is narrow, limited, constricting and the expansive canvas of the mind, where there are no frontiers. Through its plot, it also throws up a topically tantalizing debate on the supremacy of man over machine. The plot focuses on the gallant attempts of a bunch of heroes to save Zion: the only human city left in a mechanized 2099. The legend of Neo (Keanu Reeves) and his attempt to save the human mind results in two other high-octane action sequels: *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions*.

## ▶ MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA

PERIOD DRAMA | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ROB MARSHALL
**CAST:**
GONG LI, ZIYI ZHANG, MICHELLE YEOH, KEN WATANABE
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS.

Again, it's time for that perennial debate: is the book better or the film? Once again, we heard rumblings as Rob Marshall tried hard to recreate the silken splendour of a lost world, but Arthur Golden's best-selling *Memoirs Of A Geisha* still remains a chartbuster. Its mystique, magic and mesmerism are hard to duplicate. Of course, the film has an extremely rich canvas as it intricately weaves together visuals of dark, oriental exotica when geishas in Japan ruled the night with their exquisite charm and skills. But beyond ornate kimonos and opium-filled teahouses, it was a vicious, ruthless world where women fought and petty rivalries transformed friends into foes. Into this harsh world is thrown the nine-year-old village girl whose fingers still smell of fish and whose dreams of escape die in this unnatural world of powder and make-believe. The protagonist of *Memoirs Of A Geisha* is skillfully played by Ziyi Zhang who breathes life into the character of Sayuri, a geisha, who dreams of love even as Gong Li smoulders as Hatsumomo, her spiteful rival, who tries hard to break her spirit and verve.

## ▶ MICHAEL CLAYTON

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
TONY GILROY
**CAST:**
GEORGE CLOONEY, TILDA SWINTON, TOM WILKINSON
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

George Clooney has perfected the role of the tormented insider. In *Michael Clayton*, he plays a 'fixer' in a law firm who sees himself as a 'janitor' since his job entails a lot of cleaning-up behind the scenes to ensure that high-powered clients win. Doesn't matter if they are guilty or not, they must always go scot-free. So, everything's fair in biz and war, even defending a corporation that is being rightly sued for poisonous pollution. But only until Michael Clayton's (George Clooney) friend and mentor (Tom Wilkinson) gets the conscience call. Time for Clayton to discover the hero within and stop sleepwalking through his life that is as drab as his power suits and poker games. At times, the narrative gets somewhat dense, but leave it to Clooney to carry you through this legal maze that also takes a detour into his personal hell. His tangled private life grips the imagination.

## ▶ MIDNIGHT COWBOY

DRAMA | 1969 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN SCHLESINGER
**CAST:**
DUSTIN HOFFMAN, JOHN VOIGHT

Naive Texan Joe Black (John Voight) moves to New York in search of a good life and ends up as a male prostitute in seedy Manhattan. The only bright spot in his life being the strange bond he strikes up with a sleazy street conman, Ratso Rizo (Dustin Hoffman), who guides him through Eldorado's underbelly. The high point of *Midnight Cowboy* is the friendship between two down-and-out men who come together despite their differences. Their common bond is an undying hope for a

**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

better life, even as New York's harsh reality and loneliness bleed their very soul. Powerful performances by the two lead players and the chilling encapsulation of big city blues make this a memorable film.

## ▶ MILLION DOLLAR BABY

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
CLINT EASTWOOD
**CAST:**
CLINT EASTWOOD, HILARY SWANK, MORGAN FREEMAN
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTION, BEST ACTRESS (HILARY SWANK).

*Million Dollar Baby* is a high adrenalin testament of female empowerment. It is the strongest feminist statement made in recent times. Though a debate on euthanasia emerges as a subtext, *Million Dollar Baby* essentially belongs to Maggie Fitzgerald (Hilary Swank) and her attempts to transcend her destiny as American trawler trash. Maggie has been a down-and-out waitress, washing dishes and stealthily pocketing leftovers. Nothing's on her side, not even age. For now, she's 30-something and wants to be a professional boxer. Why? Because when she punches the bag, she's punching everyone who has denied her a chance to live a decent, successful life. Her only hope is cynical Frankie Dunn (Clint Eastwood), a trainer, who runs a gym and trains only guys, not girls. Maggie's persistence makes him relent and soon they are making headlines, as Maggie becomes America's prizefighter. Till tragedy strikes. Swank and Eastwood pitch in riveting performances, truly justifying the shower of Oscar awards for the film.

## ▶ THE MIRACLE WORKER

DRAMA | 1969 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ARTHUR PENN
**CAST:**
PATTY DUKE, ANNE BANCROFT
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (ANNE BANCROFT) AND BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (PATTY DUKE).

Seven-year-old Hellen Keller (Patty Duke) is rescued from her bleak world of sensory deprivation by a teacher, Anne Sullivan (Anne Bancroft), who uses unconventional methods to teach the physically challenged girl how to overcome her disabilities. *The Miracle Worker*, that inspired Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Black*, scored heavily because it represented the familiar theme of courage-against-adversity in a style that was devoid of sentimentality.

## ▶ MONSTER

CRIME | 2003 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PATTY JENKINS
**CAST:**
CHARLIZE THERON, CHRISTINA RICCI, BRUCE DERN

A biopic on the life of Aileen Wuornos, a serial killer, who killed seven men before she was hanged in 2002, *Monster* is a disturbing picture of urban American rot. Is Wuornos (Charlize Theron, with 25 pounds added on and an unflattering make-up) the archetypal ugly American psycho or does she have some motive behind her crimes? Without justifying her horrific acts, the director gives us a *dekko* into her mindset that prompted her

**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (CHARLIZE THERON).

on this self-destructive path. While her first killing is an act of self-defence, the rest of her victims are mostly soft targets, as the loveless woman strikes back against a loveless world. The only bond she has is with introvert lesbian Selby (Christina Ricci) whom she meets in a gay bar. Soon, this relationship too begins to develop into a dark, unhealthy power equation, catapulting the prostitute towards unbridled doom. Watch out for power-packed performance by Charlize Theron who sheds her glamorous image to completely slip into the shoes of the white trash hooker with questionable morals and a misanthropic mindset.

## ▶ MONSTER'S BALL

DRAMA | 2001 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARC FOSTER
**CAST:**
BILLY BOB THORNTON, HALLE BERRY, HEATH LEDGER
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (HALLE BERRY).

Can sex be therapeutic? Can a momentary physical high, even for a short while, ameliorate grief, pain and bitterness? Can two individuals who ought to hate each other, find something like love? That's the teasing premise behind *Monster's Ball*. The film is an interesting study of human behaviour under duress. Hank Grotowski (Billy Bob Thornton) is a Corrections Officer who oversees the execution of a death-row inmate convicted of killing a cop. On the personal front, he has a miserable family life and inherits the prejudices of his racist father (Peter Boyle). A coincidence brings him face to face with the dead criminal's wife, Leticia Musgrove (Halle Berry), who has her own tale of woe. The two try to seek solace and forget their troubles by having a steamy sexual encounter. And somewhere down the line, they clear the cobwebs in their lives and look towards a better future. With their scintillating performances, Thornton and Berry bring alive on screen two unusual characters.

## ▶ MOONSTRUCK

ROMANCE | 1987 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
NORMAN JEWISON
**CAST:**
NICHOLAS CAGE, CHER

*Moonstruck* is a quirky treatise on love, with an undercurrent of comedy that adds a delightful touch to the drama. Cher, an American-Italian widow, lives with her parents and runs a bookstore to bide her time. And it is out of sheer weariness that she decides to marry her friend (Danny Aiello), even as her

**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (CHER).

parents (Vincent Gardenia and Olympia Dukakis) try to live through their weathered marriage. But suddenly, the fatigue flips and Cher is moonstruck when she meets her fiance's estranged brother (Nicholas Cage). It's the beginning of a passionate affair that dazzles and fades like the leitmotif of the film: the big-as-pizza-pie moon. Watch out for Cher who is magnificent as the bittersweet widow.

## ▶ MRS. MINIVER

DRAMA | 1942 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
WILLIAM WYLER
**CAST:**
GREER GARSON, WALTER PIDGEON
**AWARDS:**
SIX OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR AND BEST ACTRESS (GREER GARSON).

Mrs. Miniver is the dream woman: tough, strong-willed, family-oriented and unflinchingly patriotic, even as William Wyler's war drama is the perfect propaganda film which uplifted the sagging spirits of people in England during World War II. Even Churchill supposedly recognized *Mrs. Miniver*'s importance as a morale-booster. While the young Brits were fighting on the battlefront, people like Kay Miniver and her husband (Walter Pidgeon) provided shelter, comfort and aid to distressed people around them. Indeed, they were no less war heroes than those engaged in actual war duty. *Mrs. Miniver* touches your heart and makes your spirit soar.

## ▶ MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS

THRILLER | 1974 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
SIDNEY LUMET
**CAST:**
ALBERT FINNEY, LAUREN BACALL, INGRID BERGMAN
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (INGRID BERGMAN).

*Murder On The Orient Express* is classic Agatha Christie fare. There are almost a dozen major stars as passengers on-board the ill-fated Orient Express during its eventful journey in 1935. Albert Finney plays the iconic detective, Hercule Poirot, with superb skill, as he tries to solve the murder of a millionaire on the snowbound train. The suspects include all quirky characters that comprise the strange menagerie on-board: an obnoxious American (Lauren Bacall); an African missionary (Ingrid Bergman); an English officer returning from India with his companion (Sean Connery and Vanessa Redgrave) and the Hungarian royalty (Jacqueline Bisset and Michael York). Truly, an eclectic mix that makes for some memorable viewing.

## ▶ MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY

DRAMA | 1935 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
FRANK LLOYD
**CAST:**
CHARLES LAUGHTON, CLARK GABLE
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST PICTURE.

Eighteenth-century England. A ship is sent to Tahiti to bring breadfruit trees to feed slaves in a British colony. The ship is under the command of ruthless Captain Bligh (Charles Laughton) who believes in discipline and punishment. He punishes his seamen with death if they do not meet his expectations. First Mate Fletcher Christian (Clark Gable) leads a mutiny against the tyrant and sends him off on a lifeboat after taking charge of the ship. But Bligh returns to take revenge. Relentless action and gripping drama on the high seas, with

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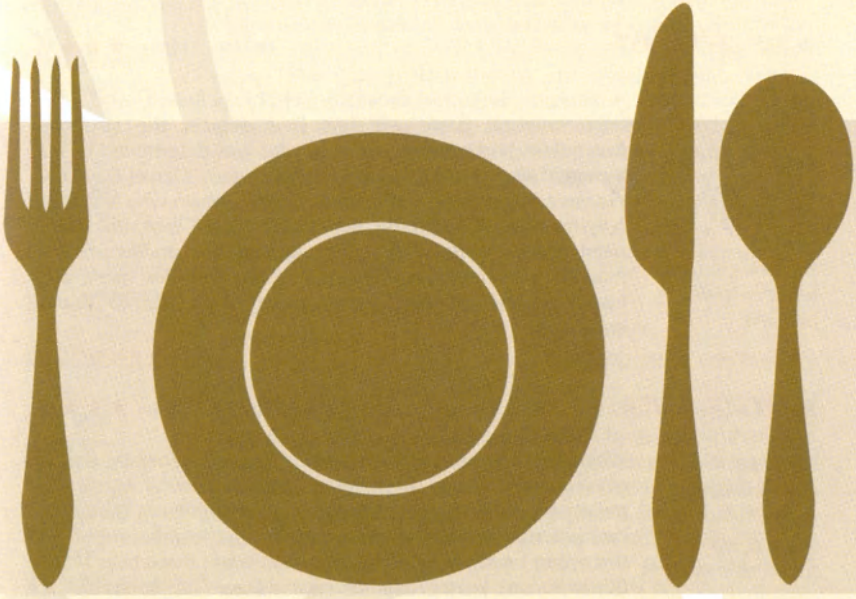

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some swashbuckling performances, especially by Clark Gable, make *Mutiny On The Bounty* a memorable film.

## ▶ MY FAIR LADY

DRAMA | 1964 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GEORGE CUCKOR
**CAST:**
AUDREY HEPBURN, REX HARRISON
**AWARDS:**
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ACTOR (REX HARRISON).

A misogynist professor of phonetics has a bet with his best friend. The challenge is to transform an uncouth, working class girl into a high-society lady by merely working on her language and intonation. Obviously, he doesn't account for the resultant changes that involve both emotional and attitudinal makeovers. End result? The all-knowing, arrogant Professor Higgins (Rex Harrison) is at a loss for words when the common flower girl, Eliza Dolittle (Audrey Hepburn), turns into a sophisticate who not only fits in perfectly with the upper-crust crowd but also steals away his heart. A delightful musical fairy tale, *My Fair Lady* showcases love triumphing against all odds, including class barriers.

## ▶ MY LEFT FOOT

DRAMA | 1989 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JIM SHERIDAN
**CAST:**
DANIEL DAY-LEWIS, BRENDA FRICKER
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (DANIEL DAY-LEWIS).

A biopic on the inspirational story of Christy Brown, who suffers from cerebral palsy, *My Left Foot* depicts the struggles, frustrations and trauma of a man who was determined to lead a normal life, despite having just his left foot. Daniel Day-Lewis puts in a magnificent portrayal of Christy Brown who learns not only how to fulfill his basic needs with his left foot, but also to paint and to write with it. The lack of any undercurrent of maudlin sentimentality only makes his struggles more awe-inspiring. *My Left Foot* shows there is no bar to human endeavour.

## ▶ MYSTIC RIVER

THRILLER | 2003 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
CLINT EASTWOOD
**CAST:**
SEAN PENN, TIM ROBBINS, KEVIN BACON, LAURA LINNEY
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (SEAN PENN) AND BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (TIM ROBBINS).

When the American Dream turns sour, you generally end up getting great cinema. Remember *American Beauty*? *Mystic River* re-lives the American nightmare in equally terrifying clarity. The drama is set in a rough working class Boston neighbourhood and the action begins one balmy afternoon when three boys – Sean (Kevin Bacon), Jimmy (Sean Penn) and Dave (Tim Robbins) – are interrupted in the midst of their game by two men. The intruders call themselves cops and take away Dave with them while the other two boys watch helplessly. Four days of captivity coupled with paedophilia are enough to change the course of everyone's life. Add to this the brutal murder of Jimmy's 19-year-old daughter and you have a classic whodunnit that is much more than a crime thriller. Slowly, painstakingly, *Mystic River* unravels the mystery of a society that has turned sick beneath the prosperity. Serious and startling, the film is a must-see.

## ▶ NETWORK

DRAMA | 1976 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
SIDNEY LUMET
**CAST:**
FAYE DUNAWAY, WILLIAM HOLDEN, PETER FINCH
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (PETER FINCH) AND BEST ACTRESS (FAYE DUNAWAY).

Television news is all about ratings, TRPs and rarely about real news. This is the chilling revelation that Sidney Lumet made in the 1970s. A dark satire on the news business that often puts a premium on sensationalism at the expense of hard news, *Network* uncovers the dirt in the UBS boardrooms – a news network that is falling behind its rivals. To revive the network's sagging fortunes, program executive Diana Christensen (Faye Dunaway) revamps the news bulletin. She makes it into an unorthodox mix of a variety show, spiked with a dash of evangelism, where a former anchor is projected as the mad prophet of the airwaves. Watch out for the sensational climax.

## ▶ NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN

CRIME | 2007 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ETHAN COEN, JOEL COEN
**CAST:**
TOMMY LEE JONES, JAVIER BARDEM, JOSH BROLIN, WOODY HARRELSON
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR AND BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (JAVIER BARDEM).

*No Country For Old Men* is a hard-hitting story of three men enmeshed in a web of crime and punishment. There's Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem), a ruthless killer, who escapes from the sheriff's hold and unleashes mayhem with his trigger-happy ways. There's Moss (Josh Brolin), an ex-welder, who steals a cache of loot after a Mexican drug deal goes awry while he's on a hunting expedition. And, finally, there's Sheriff Ed Tom Bell (Tommy Lee Jones) who is hell-bent on restoring order and the rule of law in his territory. *No Country For Old Men* has unpredictable twists and turns, remorseless blackguards, obsessive men of action and the bleak terrain of moral ambiguity. This is gripping crime noir with a silent lament on a dying civilization.

## ▶ NORMA RAE

DRAMA | 1979 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN RITT
**CAST:**
SALLY FIELD, RON LEIBMAN
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (SALLY FIELD).

Before Erin Brokovich, there was Norma Rae: a female activist who changed the life of her community by teaching them the power of protest. A small-town working-class girl, Norma (Sally Field) is a single mother who ends up as a firebrand union leader and organizes the cotton mill workers into a union that protests against low wages and dismal working conditions. All this, at a time when union leaders were treated as pariahs by fearful workers who dismissed them as communists, agitators, crooks, Jews or all four rolled into one. In *Norma Rae*, watch women power unleashed as Norma shuts down her machine and stands on a table, with the word "UNION" hastily written on a placard. In a stupendous show of solidarity among the workforce, soon all machines shut down.

## ▶ OLIVER

DRAMA | 1968 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
CAROL REED
**CAST:**
MARK LESTER, OLIVER REED, RON MOODY
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

A grand musical based on Charles Dickens' classic, *Oliver Twist*, the film is a joyous celebration of a young orphan's (Mark Lester) life as he looks for happiness in a city that is full of crooks, pickpockets and gangsters. *Oliver* boasts of unforgettable numbers that include *Food, Glorious food, I'm reviewing the situation* and several others.

## ▶ ON GOLDEN POND

ROMANCE | 1981 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARK RYDEL
**CAST:**
KATHARINE HEPBURN, JANE FONDA, HENRY FONDA
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (HENRY FONDA) AND BEST ACTRESS (KATHARINE HEPBURN).

A poignant story about re-discovering the joy of relationships, *On Golden Pond* is an ode to marriage and family, without being maudlin. An old married couple (Katharine Hepburn and Henry Fonda) returns to their long-abandoned home at Golden Pond where they are soon joined by their daughter (Jane Fonda) and her fiancé. It isn't an idyllic family reunion since the relationship between the father and daughter is fraught with undercurrents and resentment. It takes a boating accident and a little boy (the fiancé's son) to unite the family, as the crotchety father (Henry Fonda) re-learns lessons of parenting and bridges the gap with his daughter. Great performances. Gratifying drama.

## ▶ ON THE WATERFRONT

DRAMA | 1954 | ★★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ELIA KAZAN
**CAST:**
MARLON BRANDO, ROD STEIGER, EVA MARIE SAINT
**AWARDS:**
EIGHT OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR AND BEST ACTOR (MARLON BRANDO).

Catch Marlon Brando in one of his best roles, other than *The Godfather*. Brando's street fighter, Terry Malloy, who takes on his mafia bosses for the sake of truth, justice, and all things fair, is a mesmerizing portrayal of the quintessential rebel. In *On The Waterfront*, Malloy is a former prizefighter who does the dirty work for the mob, simply because his elder brother is a key gang member. But when he falls in love with the sister of one of the mob's victims, he realizes it's time to stand up, speak up and use his fighting skills for a noble cause. He laments before his brother that he could have been a contender for a good and ethical life, if only he had been given a chance. *On The Waterfront* is an evergreen drama on the conflict between good and evil.

## ▶ ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

DRAMA | 1975 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MILOS FORMAN
**CAST:**
JACK NICHOLSON, LOUISE FLETCHER

Randle Patrick McMurphy (Jack Nicholson) is a small-time conman who tries to escape a short prison term by faking insanity because he believes a stint in the mental asylum will be easier. But McMurphy finds the asylum to be a living hell, run by a dictatorial

**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR.

nurse (Louise Fletcher) who drugs the inmates into subservience. It doesn't take long for our anti-hero to lead a rebellion by a ragtag army of mentally challenged inmates. Nicholson's portrayal of the angry, rebellious McMurphy made the anti-hero almost legendary in celluloid history. Significantly, the film remains topical for all times since the revolt in the asylum by the so-called weak and non-heroic people illustrates the essential freedom of human spirit and its war against authoritarianism.

## ▶ ORDINARY PEOPLE

DRAMA | 1981 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT REDFORD
**CAST:**
DONALD SUTHERLAND, MARIE TYLER MOORE, TIMOTHY HUTTON
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

The Jarretts may not be ordinary people in terms of their economic status. With their colonial house and comfortable lifestyle, they enunciate the American Dream. However, all it takes is the accidental death of their son to reveal the fissures within the family. When it comes to building relationships and bonding, the Jarretts are ordinary people. An abusive father, a suicidal son, emotionally imbalanced husband-wife and parent-child relationship: it's a disturbing picture of familial strife that Robert Redford paints in *Ordinary People*, his directorial debut.

## ▶ OUT OF AFRICA

ROMANCE | 1985 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
SYDNEY POLLACK
**CAST:**
MERYL STREEP, ROBERT REDFORD, KLAU MARIA BRANDAUER
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

*Out Of Africa* is a visually stunning film, replete with love, longing and despair between Karen Blixen (Meryl Streep), a Danish baroness, and free-spirited Denys (Robert Redford). Kenya provides an opulent backdrop. The film is based on the biographical account of Blixen, who documented her experiences in Kenya, under the pseudonym Isak Deneson. *Out Of Africa* is an unbridled celebration of romance, with Redford taking his love on a safari into the bush, saving her from a lioness, dancing with her by the firelight and spending a memorable night with her in a tent. Eventually, it's the conflict between freedom and possession that forms the crux of this adult drama.

## ▶ PAPER MOON

DRAMA | 1973 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
PETER BOGDANOVICH
**CAST:**
RYAN O'NEAL, TATUM O'NEAL, MADELINE KAHN
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (TATUM O'NEAL).

In *Paper Moon*, Addie Loggins and Moses Pray are an invincible duo when it comes to conning people. So what if Addie (Tatum O'Neal) is just a cherubic 10-year-old and Moses (Ryan O'Neal) is a middling con artist? The two come together under expedient circumstances when Addie loses her mother in a car crash and Moses – the supposed father – offers to drive the girl down to her relatives. He soon discovers that the little girl is a far better con artist than him and makes her his partner-in-crime. *Paper Moon* is a heartwarming tale of bonding between a father and daughter, with its share of tears and smiles.

## ▶ PATTON

DRAMA | 1966 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
FRANKLIN J. SHAFFNER
**CAST:**
GEORGE C. SCOTT, KARL MALDEN, MICHAEL STRONG
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR AND BEST ACTOR (GEORGE C. SCOTT).

To date, *Patton* is regarded as the most compelling war drama and a classic character study of a military man. The film essentially is a biopic of controversial US General George S. Patton Jr. (George C. Scott) who furthered his country's cause through the relentless campaigns he waged in North Africa, Sicily and Europe in the tumultuous '40s. But more than his valour, he is remembered for the controversy that dogged his career after he slapped an enlisted man who was weary of battle. This, in the eyes of the unflinching commander, was a sign of cowardice and needed immediate correction. Gritty drama, action-packed war sequences and a kaleidoscopic picture of a war hero, *Patton* is memorable cinema.

## ▶ PHILADELPHIA

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JONATHAN DEMME
**CAST:**
TOM HANKS, DENZEL WASHINGTON, ANTONIO BANDERAS
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (TOM HANKS).

Andrew Beckett (Tom Hanks), a high-flying lawyer, dying of AIDS, fights back against the law firm that threw him out after discovering he was a homosexual and had AIDS. Before his boss (Jason Robards) came to know the truth, Andrew was his favourite employee, scaling the corporate ladder with unmitigated success. Beckett desperately looks for a lawyer to fight his case. Finally, he manages to convince Joe Miller (Denzel Washington), a black lawyer, who isn't unfamiliar with social prejudices. Initially, Miller too reacts to AIDS with discomfiture but soon fights the ingrained bias and understands the trauma of the dying man. This is the beginning of a beautiful friendship and a gritty fight against conventional society. Both Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington pitch in towering portrayals in *Philadelphia*, a film that paved the way for alternate sexuality, marginalizing anyone who frowned upon it.

## ▶ THE PIANIST

DRAMA | 2002 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROMAN POLANSKI
**CAST:**
ADRIEN BRODY
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR AND BEST ACTOR (ADRIEN BRODY).

*The Pianist* is based on director Roman Polanski's memories of growing up in Poland during the Nazi occupation. But this isn't a typical Holocaust film. Intensely moving and hard-hitting, it is unapologetic about the Nazi atrocities, without entering concentration camps. Tracing the experiences of the celebrated Jewish pianist, Wladyslaw Szpilman (Adrien Brody), as he tries to escape the atrocities and survive in war-torn Warsaw after Germany defeated Poland in 1939, *The Pianist* paints a horrific yet heroic picture of one man's attempt to remain alive. While his family is herded into cattle carts and sent off to concentration camps, the pianist goes into hiding and battles hunger, disease and near-death situations before Soviets arrive. This film is generally regarded as among the best in Roman Polanski's oeuvre.

## ▶ THE PIANO

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JANE CAMPION
**CAST:**
HOLLY HUNTER, HARVEY KEITEL, SAM NEILL
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (HOLLY HUNTER).

*The Piano* is set in the mid-19th century when sexual permissiveness was still a far cry. British emigrant Stewart (Sam Neill) lands in New Zealand with his mute wife, Ada (Holly Hunter), her illegitimate daughter (Anna Paquin) and her piano. He carries with him his baggage of uptight British mores. As Stewart feels the piano is too big for his house, he wants to sell it to Baines (Harvey Keitel), another Englishman. Unlike Stewart, Baines has adopted the Maori tradition and believes in unbridled freedom of expression. He is ready to buy the piano but only if Ada teaches him to play it. An offer Ada can't resist since the piano is her only form of expression. And when Baines wants to strike a deal with her, offering her the piano in return, she can hardly refuse the deal. Not because she needs the piano, but because she can't curb her passion anymore … Sensuality bursts forth in encounters between Holly Hunter and Harvey Keitel, only because of its muted tones and subtle nuances.

## ▶ PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST

ADVENTURE | 2006 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GORE VERBINSKI
**CAST:**
JOHNNY DEPP, KEIRA KNIGHTLEY, ORLANDO BLOOM
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR FOR VISUAL EFFECTS.

Debonair Johnny Depp is back as gentleman pirate Jack Sparrow who uses his grime and grimace to cover a heart of gold. Yet, unlike the first episode, *Pirates Of The Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* is too long and exhausting. Moreover, it has too little of Jack Sparrow and too much of squid-like baddie Davy Jones (Bill Nighy) and his army of sea phantoms. The film takes off from the first episode. Captain Sparrow gets back the *Black Pearl* and his bizarre crew of scoundrels after escaping from an island of cannibals who are determined to have him for their annual barbecue. But before the *Black Pearl* can set sail, the Pirate must

settle a blood debt he owes a long-forgotten enemy who is ostensibly indestructible. They have to find his heart that still beats in a hidden chest. But the hedonistic Sparrow finds two suckers who are willing to do anything for love – Keira Knightley and her fiancé, Orlando Bloom. He forces them to help him tackle his enemy, little knowing that it's another heart he needs to be bothered about. And that's his own that seems to beat only for the delectable Ms. Knightley.

## ▶ PLACES IN THE HEART

DRAMA | 1984 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT BENTON
**CAST:**
SALLY FIELD, DANNY GLOVER, JOHN MALKOVICH
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (SALLY FIELD).

It's Texas, during the Great Depression. Hard times were the grim reality of those days. More so, for a young Sheriff's widow (Sally Field) who is being forced to leave her farm and send her kids away so that they get a better deal in life. But being a doughty woman, she is determined to keep her farm and kids. Providence helps her by sending a black cotton farmer (Danny Glover) to her doorsteps and a blind boarder (John Malkovich) who eases the financial crunch a bit. In *Places In The Heart*, this odd motley of three adults heroically rewrites the subtext of the depressing times. They build a haven of hope amidst the gloom. Warm. Sentimental. Touching.

## ▶ PLATOON

ACTION | 1986 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
OLIVER STONE
**CAST:**
TOM BERENGER, WILLEM DAFOE, CHARLIE SHEEN
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

In *Platoon*, witness the horrors of war in Vietnam through the eyes of young recruit Chris Taylor (Charlie Sheen) who confides his fears, insecurities and misgivings in letters to his grandmother. An innocent, optimistic, young American patriot, Taylor joins the war as his duty. But as violence and indignities begin to pile up, the inevitable truth dawns on him. War is bad, and can never be justified, even as the combat zone is a place where nobody belongs. In this no-holds-barred indictment of state-sponsored violence, Oliver Stone reportedly recounts his experiences as a war veteran in Vietnam.

## ▶ PRIZZI'S HONOUR

DRAMA | 1985 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN HUSTON
**CAST:**
JACK NICHOLSON, KATHLEEN TURNER, ANGELICA HUSTON
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (ANGELICA HUSTON).

In *Prizzi's Honour*, Charley Partana (Jack Nicholson) and Irene Walker (Kathleen Turner) have just one thing in common. They are both trigger-happy mob assassins who treat their dirty business as just another job. But opposites attract and Charley is irresistibly drawn towards the angelic Turner. So what if he's already called off his engagement to Maerose Prizzi (Angelica Huston), his cousin, who has been exiled from the mobster family? Can Charley and Irene come together and dream of a normal love life in a Brooklyn mob where honour is above everything and death is the easiest dispensation? Their troubles

are compounded when Charley realizes his beloved is the killer who snatched a hit from under his nose. This gangster yarn is an absolute thriller.

## ▶ THE PRODUCERS

COMEDY | 1968 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MEL BROOKS
**CAST:**
GENE WILDER, ZERO MOSTEL
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS.

Mel Brooks' zany musical, *The Producers*, is a delightful spoof on Broadway and the backroom bumbling that makes or breaks many a play. Max Bialystock (Zero Mostel), a flop producer, hasn't had a hit for long. The only ray of hope for him is to follow the advice of his accountant, Leo Bloom (Gene Wilder), who suggests he swindle old widows and uses their money to produce the biggest flop show of his life. Ironically, the play, "Springtime with Hitler", becomes a hit and the producers are in a deeper malaise. So, where did he get it right? Crazy, crooked and completely witty.

## ▶ PULP FICTION

ACTION | 1994 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
QUENTIN TARANTINO
**CAST:**
JOHN TRAVOLTA, UMA THURMAN, BRUCE WILLIS, SAMUEL L. JACKSON
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST WRITING.

Historically, *Pulp Fiction* is a genre-defining film in Hollywood. Quentin Tarantino introduced a whole new idiom of filmmaking with *Reservoir Dogs*, a hard-hitting insight on crime and criminals who were depicted minus all moral deliberations. However, *Reservoir Dogs* was still raw. The idiom found a more refined enunciation in *Pulp Fiction*, where the drama of illicit romance, revenge, rebellion and violence is shown from the point of view of the anti-hero. Even the narrative is a breakthrough as it follows four protagonists in four different stories that head towards a single climax. The Mob boss (Ving Rhames) tries to maintain his stranglehold on the underworld, while his foot soldiers play their nasty games. John Travolta has a naughty fling with his flirtatious girl, Uma Thurman, while Bruce Willis tries to walk out on him. In between, there's the Bible-reciting hit man, Samuel L. Jackson, and the clinical killer, Harvey Keitel, unleashing mayhem when least expected. This one's a zany, post-modern look at anti-heroics.

## ▶ THE QUEEN

DRAMA | 2006 | ★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEPHEN FREARS
**CAST:**
HELEN MIRREN, MICHAEL SHEEN, JAMES CROMWELL
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (HELEN MIRREN).

*The Queen* that deals with the controversial one week that followed Diana's equally controversial death in 1997, treads the fine line between irreverence and sympathy. The Queen who left for Balmoral, immediately after the death, is seen taking nature walks, Philip and Charles indulge in stag hunts, while Britain mourns and the Princess' coffin lies in a deserted Buckingham Palace. But before the nation trashes her as uncaring and calls for an abolition of monarchy, the Queen tells us she is actually mourning in her own quiet, dignified way. And before the threat gets real, realpolitik forces her to change her stance. She returns to the palace for a more public display of grief. Till then, Tony Blair has become the most popular Prime Minister with his press statements and his politicking. The film's high point is Helen Mirren's performance as Queen Elizabeth as she is suitably restrained and completely royal.

## ▶ RAGING BULL

DRAMA | 1980 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN SCORSESE
**CAST:**
ROBERT DE NIRO, CATHY MORIARTY, JOE PESCI
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR.

Martin Scorsese's biopic on Jake LaMotta, a middleweight prizefighter, who stepped out from the Bronx to make it big in the boxing ring in the 1940s, expertly lays bare the soul of the boxer. LaMotta (Robert De Niro) is an archetypal underdog who lives by brute force and has no time for sensitivity in his blood-splattered life. Love, for him, is a painful force that gets marred by jealousy, insecurities, self-doubt and abuse. He falls in love with a brazen teenager (Cathy Moriarty) whom he spots in a swimming pool. Yet, despite marrying her, he ends up in an emotionally battered relationship with her. Rated as one of Scorsese's best films, *Raging Bull* has poignancy behind the brute force: outward violence incipiently seeps into a man's insides and causes him to self-destruct. Robert De Niro, in the lead role, is all guts and fury, especially in the hard-hitting boxing sequences.

## ▶ RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

ACTION | 1981 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:**
HARRISON FORD, KAREN ALLEN, PAUL FREEMAN
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS.

The fedora-wearing American archeologist, Indiana Jones, with his trigger-happy ways and nerves of steel remains one of the most colourful adventurers of all times. He captured the adventure buff's imagination long before Captain Jack Sparrow (*Pirates Of The Caribbean*) sailed the high seas and Lara Croft slipped into the boots of the tomb raider. In his debut film, Steven Spielberg's hero (Harrison Ford) is caught in a race against time to find the rare artefact, the Ark of the Covenant (the golden casket where ancient Hebrews hid the Ten Commandments), before the infamous Nazis beat him in a

death-defying mission. Death defying, did we say? Action never got more hectic as edge-of-the-seat SFX bombards the big screen with monstrous creepy-crawlies, incendiary bombs, booby-trapped tombs and desert chases, brawls in Nepal, bouts with drunken Sherpas and a former girlfriend in Tibet, make Indy the ultimate globe-trotting hero. Even today, The Indy Jones series remain one of celluloid's most eyeball popping pulp fiction stories.

## ▶ RAIN MAN

DRAMA | 1988 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
BARRY LEVINSON
**CAST:**
DUSTIN HOFFMAN, TOM CRUISE
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE.

Charlie (Tom Cruise) is the quintessential yuppie who couldn't care less about people or purpose unless he saw some profit in it for himself. When his moneyed father dies, leaving him a pittance, he sets out to find his long lost brother, Raymond (Dustin Hoffman), who is a beneficiary of the bulk of his father's wealth. Charlie finds the autistic Raymond in an institution. He immediately tries to gain custody of his brother so that he could take his millions. But somewhere down their travels – and travails – the two brothers bond and become family. Dustin Hoffman's amazing portrayal of the figure-crunching Raymond makes the autistic savant an unforgettable hero.

## ▶ RATATOUILLE

ANIMATION | 2007 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
BRAD BIRD
**CAST:**
VOICE OF PATTON OSWALT, LOU ROMANO
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ANIMATED FEATURE.

Paris is truly a dream city. In *Ratatouille*, it can make even a rat's strange dreams come true. Remy, a rat, fantasizes about gourmet cooking like his idol, Chef Gusteau, who had once declared, "Anyone Can Cook." There is also a poor garbage boy, Alfredo Linguini, who dreams of making it big in the restaurant business. *Ratatouille* is one of producer Pixar's best animation films. It follows Remy's adventures as he tries to play surrogate chef to Linguini, when he lands up in a once-famous Parisian eatery after being separated from his rat family. But Remy's fortunes are inextricably linked with that of Linguini after he accidentally creates a culinary marvel that is passed off as Linguini's handiwork. Together, they reinstate the eatery's lost glory and forge a rare friendship. However, it is after much hair tugging, scratching and biting that they learn how to communicate effectively. *Ratatouille*'s a delight for gourmets: go drool at the expertly presented Crepes Suzettes and Beef Bourguignon. Also, the splendid Paris backdrop gives the film a touch of class.

## ▶ RAY

MUSICAL | 2004 | ★★★½

As the blind American music legend, Ray Charles, who transcended boundaries among jazz, pop and country, Jamie

**DIRECTION:**
TAYLOR HACKFORD
**CAST:**
JAMIE FOXX
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (JAMIE FOXX).

Foxx delivers a power-packed performance in *Ray*. While Ray was travelling for one of his shows, the bus driver asked him, "How have you got around without a cane or a dog?" Ray answered, "You tell me how have YOU got around without a cane or a dog?" That is the spirit this film celebrates – almost like *Black* – the indomitable human spirit that fails to be subdued, no matter what. Ray fought his tragedies – he lost his little brother and his eyesight during childhood – to scale rare heights in the music world. And he did it all by himself. First, as a struggling Nat King Cole mimic in sawdust bars and then as a celebrated singer, besieged by autograph hunters. And all his magic came from keyboards of a piano that he first discovered in a rundown barn shop. *Ray* is a great period piece, with music that makes you want to get on the floor. You would have liked to see more of his personal life – Ray was reportedly addicted to heroin and women – but then, if *Ray* is about the uplifting power of music and the human spirit, it's quite okay.

## ▶ REBECCA

DRAMA | 1940 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ALFRED HITCHCOCK
**CAST:**
LAURENCE OLIVIER, JOAN FONTAINE
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE.

Daphne du Maurier's bestseller, *Rebecca*, remains a classic in the celluloid adaptation by Alfred Hitchcock. He made this film much before he had perfected his distinct brand of thrillers. *Rebecca* is quite a faithful adaptation of the novel that follows the travails of the young second Mrs. Maxim De Winters (Joan Fontaine) as she tries to win the affection of her husband (Laurence Olivier). She also tries to establish herself as the mistress of Manderlay, the De Winter's family mansion, which is shadowed by the presence of the beautiful and mysterious Rebecca, the first Mrs. Maxim De Winter, who died in an accident. A gripping tale that blends mystery with romance, *Rebecca* is totally different from the rest of the Hitchcock oeuvre.

## ▶ REDS

DRAMA | 1981 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
WARREN BEATTY
**CAST:**
WARREN BEATTY, DIANE KEATON, JACK NICHOLSON
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR (WARREN BEATTY).

*Reds* is a biopic on the life and times of John Reed (Warren Beatty), the American Communist, who dreamt of a leftist revolution in America. After having visited Russia during its tumultuous political upheaval and chronicling the historic revolution in his famous book, *Ten Days That Shook The World*, Reed returns to the US and sets up the communist party there. Reed's eyewitness account of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution is today heralded as a classic piece of political reportage. However, most of the film chronicles his romance with activist Louise Bryant (Diane Keaton), who leaves her conservative husband and travels to Russia with Reed. A strong political film, *Reds* was nominated for 12 Oscars. It also features Jack Nicholson as noted playwright Eugene O'Neill who formed an intrinsic part of the bohemian crowd of Left liberals in New York in the early 20th century.

## ▶ REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

DRAMA | 1990 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
BARBET SCHROEDER
**CAST:**
JEREMY IRONS, GLENN CLOSE, RON SILVER
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (JEREMY IRONS).

Claus (Jeremy Irons) and Sunny von Bulow (Glenn Close) lead a dreadful life together. In their icy mansion, with three kids, the moneyed two are far removed from each other. The distance between them is unbridgeable. The chill increases further when Sunny ends up in a comatose state – brain dead, body better than ever – and her husband is charged with injecting her with an overdose of insulin. Claus hires a Harvard Law School professor, Alan Dershowitz (Ron Silver), to fight his case, even as his wife acts the narrator and asks viewers whether her husband is the Devil. Based on a real-life case, *Reversal Of Fortune* is a hard-hitting satire on the unscrupulous lives of the rich and powerful.

## ▶ ROCKY

ACTION | 1976 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN AVILDSEN
**CAST:**
SYLVESTER STALLONE, TALIA SHIRE
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

The current heavyweight champion, Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers), wants to fight an underdog to create boxing news. It's time for Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone), a small-time boxer, to rise from the dust and punch his way to boxing glory. Balboa's nerve-wracking training regime on the streets of Philadelphia, his metamorphosis into a lean, mean fighting machine, his tenderness towards shy Ms. Shire and his hard-hitting knockout punches make for a sizzling movie. *Rocky* ended up creating an award-winning franchise that has already seen a blitzkrieg of five feisty films.

## ▶ ROMAN HOLIDAY

ROMANCE | 1957 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
WILLIAM WYLER
**CAST:**
AUDREY HEPBURN, GREGORY PECK
**AWARDS:**
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (AUDREY HEPBURN).

Audrey Hepburn made a dazzling debut in this breezy escapist romance and walked away with the Oscar for Best Actress. In *Roman Holiday*, Hepburn was ably supported by a rakish Gregory Peck. In the role of an American journalist, Peck plays the plebeian love interest to the truant and terribly bored British princess, who bolts from officialdom for a day out in lovely Rome. And what better than having as a dream companion the no-*nakhra* newspaperman who does not treat her like royalty. The Hepburn-Peck pizzazz lends this run-of-the-mill romance a rare sparkle.

## ▶ SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

WAR | 1998 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:**
TOM HANKS, MATT DAMON, TOM SIZEMORE
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR.

Steven Spielberg wanted to make a war movie where viewers would not just sit back, munch popcorns, sip Pepsi and watch the mayhem from the ringside. "I wanted the audience in the arena, not sitting off to one side," says Spielberg. "I didn't want to make something that was easy to look away from." And if that was his objective, Spielberg has succeeded. For there can be no looking away from *Saving Private Ryan*: a film that takes you into the battlefield and brings you face-to-face with brutal death. This, as Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks) and his eight-men company try to bring back Private Ryan from the battlefield to his mourning mother who has lost the rest of her three sons in World War II. While Spielberg's hand-held cameras literally thrust the viewer into the maelstrom, his superb editing creates a perfect mosaic of terror. For, the combat sequences are intensely moving and fanatically detailed. We see soldiers from belly level, losing life and limbs and literally bleeding to death.

## ▶ SCENT OF A WOMAN

DRAMA | 1992 | ★★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
MARTIN BREST
**CAST:**
AL PACINO, CHRIS O' DONNELL
**AWARDS:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR(AL PACINO).

A morality tale that highlights the importance of integrity and loyalty in an individual's life, *Scent Of A Woman* is unforgettable Al Pacino pizzazz. As the blind and bitter Colonel Frank Slade (Al Pacino) who sets out on his last journey to New York with Charlie Sims (Chris O'Donnell), his hired help from neighbouring high school, Pacino puts in a power-packed performance. One that is more loaded than his gun that threatens to go off, whenever the colonel thinks its curtains for him. From a cynical loner, he graduates into a protective father figure to the troubled youth. It's an engaging bond between two mismatched people – a young student and an over-the-hill grouch – where each brings out the best in the other.

## ▶ SCHINDLER'S LIST

DRAMA | 1993 | ★★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**CAST:**
LIAM NEESON, BEN KINGSLEY, RALPH FIENNES
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

Out of the innumerable films on the Holocaust, *Schindler's List* stands out as the most powerful documentation of this devastating tragedy. The film traces the efforts of a single man, Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), who heeds his conscience, takes positive steps, and alters the course of history. He saves 1,100 Jews from Hitler's gas chambers and helps them flee from the horrors of World War II. And what's more striking is that Schindler isn't the nicest guy around. An unabashed profiteer, he initially tries to use Jews as wage slaves in his factory in Poland. But as atrocities against Jews increase with stunning regularity, Schindler is deeply touched and changes tack. He bribes officials and befriends crucial Nazis to get a greater number of Jews out of concentration camps into his factory,

which ultimately becomes a haven for endangered Jews. With the horror and violence shot in stark black and white and riveting performances by three main players – Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley and Ralph Fiennes – the film brought Steven Spielberg his first Oscar for Best Director.

## ▶ SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

ROMANCE | 1998 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN MADDEN
**CAST:**
JOSEPH FIENNES, GWYNETH PALTROW, GEOFFREY RUSH
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST ACTRESS (GWYNETH PALTROW).

Despite its 16th century aura and period costumes, *Shakespeare In Love* is not a historical epic. Nor is it an epical love story that is elevating. Instead, it is an unadulterated comedy that has a sparkling contemporary touch, despite being anchored in the past. The director's comic eye tints everyone with a rakish charm, including Queen Elizabeth (Dame Judi Dench) who never loses the twinkle in her eyes. Not when she wagers a £ 50 bet, tells the prospective groom his betrothed has "already been plucked" or jumps across a ditch, when her subjects fail to lay their cloaks. Will Shakespeare too is the sweet and funny boy next door who spends his time in decrepit bars when he suffers from writer's block or is a wide-eyed love lorn Romeo who knows he must lose his Juliet to a richer paramour. And when he's not rehearsing on stage, he's stealing plots and ideas from arch-rival Chris Marlowe, a dignified counterpart to Will's boyish charms. The film's highpoint is its brilliant script that is crisp and multi-layered. The effortless switching between Will's real life story with the beautiful Viola De Lessep (Gwyneth Paltrow) and the writing-rehearsing of *Romeo and Juliet* is the winning stroke. The crackling chemistry between Paltrow and Fiennes and the vibrant theatre backdrop are the proverbial icing on the already rich cake.

## ▶ SHINE

DRAMA | 1996 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
SCOTT HICKS
**CAST:**
GEOFFREY RUSH, ARMIN MUELLER-STAHL, LYNN
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (GEOFFREY RUSH).

*Shine* is a biographical account of the legendary Australian pianist, David Helfgott (Geoffrey Rush), who fought his private demons before he managed to play a perfect classical repertoire, not on stage but at a small restaurant in Perth. The underlying theme in David's life had been his tumultuous relationship with his father, Peter Helfgott (Armin Mueller-Stahl), a Polish Jew, who survived Hitler's purge and settled in Australia, but only after he lost his parents in the Holocaust. Peter was obsessive about keeping his family together and was not willing to let his talented son free to hone his genius. But even after completing his training and breaking away from his possessive father, David had his own private battles to wage before the music could flow uninterrupted. Engrossing fare.

## ▶ SHREK

COMEDY | 2001 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ANDREW ADAMSON
**CAST:**
VOICE OF MIKE MYERS, EDDIE MURPHY, CAMERON DIAZ, JOHN LITHGOW
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ANIMATION FEATURE.

Shrek's a shriek, not just a scream. He is the most beautiful Ogre that ever walked across the silver screen. Why? Because he has a heart of gold and has been slickly packaged. Living in a swamp, he wants to build a huge wall around his home. But before that, he must ward off various squatters: Three Blind Mice, Red Riding Hood's Wolf, Seven Dwarfs, Robin Hood and many others displaced by the rapacious Lord Farquaad. The only way Shrek can save his land is to accept Lord Farquaad's proposal. He must save Princess Fiona from the fearsome dragon and bring her to Farquaad. Easier said than done. For Ogres have hearts. And friends who can double up as philosophers and guides despite being a donkey. Here, we are talking about the smartest ass (Eddie Murphy) in tinsel town. He not only rewrites the archetypal fairy tale but also achieves the impossible. In *Shrek*, he tames the fire-spewing dragon and transforms her into a mushy she-dragon in love. As for Princess Fiona, she's a new-millennium girl who can kick ass and also croon for her Prince Charming. End result? Loads of fun and games, state-of-the-art animation and a new end to tired and tested fairy tales: "And they lived Ugly (and happy) ever after." Amen!

## ▶ SIDEWAYS

COMEDY | 2004 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ALEXANDER PAYNE
**CAST:**
PAUL GIAMATTI, THOMAS HAYDEN CHURCH, VIRGINIA MADSEN, SANDRA OH
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

What happens when a bachelor party extends into a weeklong sojourn through California's wine country, with golf and women on the agenda? Sheer fun and a whole lot of perspectives on friendship, love, sex, commitment and marriage. In *Sideways*, two friends, Miles (Paul Giamatti) and Jack (Thomas Hayden Church), embark on a getaway trip, just before Jack walks down the aisle. Jack decides to have one last fling with feisty Stephanie (Sandra Oh), while Miles strikes up a more restrained bond with Maya (Virginia Madsen), her waitress friend. *Sideways* is a warm, sensitive and whimsical tale of self-discovery for Miles, the wannabe writer, who is terribly low on self-esteem and Jack, a failed actor, who can't think beyond sex.

## ▶ THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

THRILLER | 1991 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JONATHAN DEMME
**CAST:**
ANTHONY HOPKINS, JODIE FOSTER

*The Silence Of The Lambs* is the sort of film that makes you believe in the impossible. It makes you believe that a cannibal could be a hero and a gentleman and could even win your admiration despite sending a chill down your spine. It isn't the inexperienced FBI cadet, Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster), who becomes morally ambivalent towards the notorious Dr. Hannibal Lector (Anthony Hopkins) as she seeks his help while trying to nab another psychopath. Anthony Hopkins' intense

**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR, BEST ACTRESS.

portrayal of the character transforms Hannibal the Cannibal into such a connoisseur-cum-intellectual that even the viewer gets swept away by his charisma. Gaze into the deep, dark recesses of Hannibal's twisted soul and find out what psychopaths are made of. Horror never remained the same after this film.

## ▶ SOPHIE'S CHOICE

DRAMA | 1982 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ALAN J. PAKULA
**CAST:**
MERYL STREEP, KEVIN KLINE
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (MERYL STREEP).

A brilliant adaptation of William Styron's novel, *Sophie's Choice* is the poignant tale of its protagonist, Sophie (Meryl Streep), viewed through the eyes of her young neighbour, Stingo (Peter MacNicol), who moves into her apartment block in New York in 1947. Sophie is scarred by memories, having survived Nazi concentration camps. She tries to rebuild her life with her lover, Nathan (Kevin Kline), but history has a way of intruding into the present and memories never die, especially if they are filled with anguish.

## ▶ THE SOUND OF MUSIC

DRAMA | 1965 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT WISE
**CAST:**
JULIE ANDREWS, CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

A young, undisciplined novitiate is pulled out from a convent where she is waiting to become a nun and sent as a governess to look after Captain Von Trapp's seven children. The Naval Officer, a widower, runs his home with military precision. But only till firebrand Maria rewrites all rules in his home and ushers in music, laughter and love into his austere household. This, even as the family tries to flee the Nazis and the impending war clouds. With memorable songs like *Do-Re-Mi* and *Edelweiss*, *The Sound Of Music* is undoubtedly the most loved family classic down the ages.

## ▶ SPIDER-MAN 2

DRAMA | 2004 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
SAM RAIMI

In this sequel, *Spider-Man 2*, Spidey is a post 9/11 hero rather than an old-fashioned hero. He is losing his power. He falls from high-rises and ends up trashing his spider suit. For life has only gotten worse for Peter Parker. He is fired from his job, threatened

**CAST:**
TOBEY MAGUIRE, KIRSTEN DUNST, ALFRED MOLINA
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST VISUAL EFFECTS.

by his slumlord, lives in a creepy apartment and is discarded by his sweetheart, Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst), for a dashing astronaut. And if that's not enough, he washes his Spiderman suit and the colour runs! In despair, our reluctant hero turns his back to the Spidey act. But the world needs a hero. Specially when a scientist turns into a megalomaniac (Alfred Molina) and wants to rule the world with his four mechanical tentacles. Yup, Doc Ock transforms Peter Parker into Spider-Man again in this coming-of-age film where our hero realizes you gotta give up the simple pleasures of life for the greater good.

## ▶ STALAG 17

DRAMA | 1953 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
BILLY WILDER
**CAST:**
WILLIAM HOLDEN, OTTO PREMINGER, ROBERT STRAUSS
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (WILLIAM HOLDEN).

*Stalag 17* is regarded as one of the most authentic representations of a German Prisoner Of War camp, as it tracks the efforts of a bunch of American POWs to escape from Stalag 17 during World War II. The camp is supposed to be a veritable fortress from where no one has been able to flee. Hence, the inmates are convinced there's a spy among them and set out to hunt him down. An assorted bunch, the prisoners are headed by Sefton (William Holden), the reticent operator of the black market department store, who becomes the prime suspect; Price (Peter Graves), a security officer, who disciplines his fellow prisoners; Animal (Robert Strauss) who adores Betty Grable and a host of other desperate young men. Representing the German camp are the mean Colonel Von Scherbach (Otto Preminger) and his more amiable aide, Sergeant Schulz (Sig Ruman). *Stalag 17* is sheer vintage war drama.

## ▶ STAR WARS V: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

SCI-FI | 1980 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
IRVIN KERSHNER
**CAST:**
MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER
**AWARD:**
ONE OSCAR.

Although *Star Wars V: The Empire Strikes Back* is the second film that hit the screen after the legendary *Star Wars IV: A New Hope* in 1977, it is actually fifth in the sequel. It doesn't take off from where the first film ended, except that the rebellion is still on and the rebels are on the run. Importantly, Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and maverick Hans Solo (Harrison Ford) have now become rivals for the hand of Princess Leia and end up separated in the war against Darth Vader. While Skywalker seeks refuge on the swampy planet, Dagobah, under the tutelage of Jedi master Yoda, Hans flees with Leia to an asteroid field and tries to protect her from the Vader menace. With a darker tone, the promise of a do-or-die battle in the future and a canvas bursting forth with scintillating special effects, this sequel is serious sci-fi stuff.

## ▶ THE STING

CRIME | 1973 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
GEORGE ROY HILL
**CAST:**
PAUL NEWMAN, ROBERT REDFORD
**AWARDS:**
SEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

George Roy Hill first brought Robert Redford and Paul Newman together in the memorable gangster film, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. He tries to repeat the classic cut in *The Sting* by bringing Redford and Newman together again as charismatic criminals who score higher than the hero. In *The Sting*, they play two con artists who try to steal some ill-gotten millions from murderous mobster, Robert Shaw. However, the elaborate rip-off is mere child's play for our thoroughbreds.

## ▶ SUNSHINE BOYS

DRAMA | 1975 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
HERBERT ROSS
**CAST:**
WALTER MATHAU, GEORGE BURNS
**AWARD:**
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (GEORGE BURNS).

*Sunshine Boys* is based on Neil Simon's play and showcases the histrionics of two ageing ex-vaudevillians (George Burns and Walter Mathau) who are forced to come out of retirement and share the spotlight again for a TV show. It's a witty, slanging match that follows as the two oddballs, with bloated egos and not-yet-forgotten stardom, seek to strike some harmony and produce a show, long after having walked into the sunset.

## ▶ SYRIANA

THRILLER | 2005 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
STEPHEN GAGHAN
**CAST:**
GEORGE CLOONEY, MATT DAMON, JEFFREY WRIGHT, MAZHAR MUNIR
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (GEORGE CLOONEY).

It isn't governments that run countries. In reality, it's big business – especially oil conglomerates – that determine global politics. Profit is the sole motivation here: neither peace nor human welfare. That's the powerful indictment that *Syriana* makes through its multi-layered story that interweaves three different tracks and showcases the talents of an ensemble cast, led by George Clooney who packed 35 pounds for the film. He plays Bob Barnes, a veteran CIA agent, who begins to doubt the motives of his paymasters. He then rises against them, even as the Middle East (the unnamed country in the film) boils over with American interests meddling with internal politics. Two American oil companies are on the verge of a proposed merger while a native Prince, next in line as the Emir of the oil-rich country, refuses to bend before the American diktat. You can't get more contemporary than this.

## ▶ TENDER MERCIES

DRAMA | 1983 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
BRUCE BERESFORD
**CAST:**
ROBERT DUVALL, TESS HARPER

Mac Sledge (Robert Duvall), a down-and-out country music star, has hit rock bottom. Determined to rebuild his life, he takes up a job in a motel, run by a young widow, Rosa Lee (Tess Harper), for board, lodging and $ 2 a day. There, on the quiet

AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (ROBERT DUVALL).

Texas highway, he picks up the strings of life – and his guitar – again, with the widow's gentle loving touch and a determination to eschew the perils of glamour. A quiet film that celebrates life with dignity and poise, *Tender Mercies* boasts of a riveting performance by Robert Duvall as the washed-up musician who becomes a winner once more.

## ▶ TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY

ACTION | 1991 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JAMES CAMERON
CAST:
ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, LINDA HAMILTON, ROBERT PATRICK
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

Single mother Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) may be in a mental institution, but she knows the end of the world is near and the rise of the mean machines will ensure Armageddon for the hapless human race. The only hope for survival lies with her young son, who has been separated from her and is living under foster care. But the machines have learnt the truth and are hell-bent on snuffing out the last human hope ... unless an old, battered, less evolved terminator robot, T-800 (Arnold Schwarzenegger), turns saviour and protects the mother and son from T-1000, the super-tech menacing marauder, made up of liquid metal. Awesome special effects, coupled with adrenalin-pumping confrontations between good machine versus bad machine, ensure edge-of-the-seat thrills.

## ▶ TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

DRAMA | 1983 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JAMES L. BROOKS
CAST:
SHIRLEY MACLAINE, DEBRA WINGER, JACK NICHOLSON
AWARDS:
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR, BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTRESS (SHIRLEY MACLAINE).

A heartwarming *dekko* on familial love, *Terms Of Endearment* builds upon a mother-daughter relationship that, with the passage of time, moves from chaos to equilibrium. Shirley MacLaine, an arrogant, uptight widow, hasn't had a boyfriend since her husband died. She grows sceptical of love and is suspicious of her daughter's (Debra Winger) attempts to settle down and start a family with an ordinary literature teacher (Jeff Daniels). But her views begin to subtly change when she discovers her "uncivilized" neighbour, the hard-living, former astronaut (Jack Nicholson) isn't actually so bad. It's a sentimental, often comic, portrayal of attempts of a dysfunctional mother and daughter to find equilibrium in love and life. Add to this Jack Nicholson's dramatic edginess and you have a real family film at hand: one, where the highs come along with the lows.

## ▶ THELMA & LOUISE

DRAMA | 1991 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
RIDLEY SCOTT
CAST:
GEENA DAVIS, SUSAN SARANDON

It was just supposed to be a weekend getaway for two women, but ends up as a feminist awakening. In *Thelma & Louise*, Louise Sawyer (Susan Sarandon), an overworked Arkansas waitress, drives off with her best friend, bored housewife Thelma Dickinson (Geena Davis), in her 66 Thunderbird for a short

AWARD:
ONE OSCAR.

holiday from dreary routine. But, en route, in the parking lot of a bar, Louise has to shoot down a rapist to protect Thelma. The two have no option but to flee, with a dogged cop (Harvey Keitel) pursuing them through the American heartland. Despite their troubles, the ride of the two friends is transformed into a joyous road trip, leading to their self-discovery and vengeance against a skewed society. Sarandon and Davis put their heart and soul into this strong and startling statement on female empowerment, even as Brad Pitt makes a memorable debut as a young hitch-hiker who takes the older women for a ride.

## ▶ THERE WILL BE BLOOD

DRAMA | 2007 | ★★★½

DIRECTION:
PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON
CAST:
DANIEL DAY-LEWIS, MARTIN STRINGER
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (DANIEL DAY-LEWIS).

It takes eleven and a half minutes of *There Will Be Blood* to come up with its first dialogue, "There she is!" Our protagonist, Daniel Plainview (Daniel Day-Lewis), who has been assiduously digging into the bowels of the earth, finds his hidden treasure: silver. That seems to set the note of this art house investigation into America's twin towers: oil and religion. Although a turn-of-the-century account of a miner's growing fortunes as he taps the oil-rich Californian reserves and comes in conflict with the local godman, the film is relevant even today. For America retains its obsession with oil and God. *There Will Be Blood* is an epical portrayal of a not-so-nice man who grows into the archetypal capitalist, buying up all the land, unconcerned about people who inhabit it. Plainview lacks humanism and in his voracious greed for money, he bleeds the community of Little Boston dry. He dreams big and hopes to set up a pipeline to transmit his abundant supplies of oil without sharing his profits with shipping companies. But dreams don't always come true. Especially when the local godman wants a share in the oil money to augment the power of the church. It's a disturbing picture of America's rise to power.

## ▶ TITANIC

ROMANCE | 1997 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
JAMES CAMERON
CAST:
LEONARDO DICAPRIO, KATE WINSLET
AWARDS:
ELEVEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

It's 194-minutes long and cost $200 million to make. And it won 11 Oscars. But more than the stunning figures, it is the overwhelming sentimentality of *Titanic* that classifies it as an epical romance. The love story between commoner Jack Dawson and aristocratic Rose Dewitt Bukater, set against the ornate yet tragic backdrop of the sinking luxury liner, sends out all the right signals. It talks of a love that is passionate, permanent, soul stirring, death defying and powerful enough to break all barriers of class and destiny. And the fact that James Cameron has managed to blend steamy romance with a mind-blowing depiction of disaster makes the film even more spectacular. Watching Titanic sink, with all the attendant creaks and cracks, is truly a milestone moment in movie lore.

## ▶ TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

DRAMA | 1962 | ★★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT MULLIGAN
**CAST:**
GREGORY PECK, MARY BADHAM
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTOR (GREGORY PECK).

Based on Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, the film has been rated among the top 50 by the American Film Institute, even as Atticus Finch (Gregory Peck), the Alabama lawyer who fought against racial prejudice in the pre-Civil Rights US, is viewed as one of the most popular fictional characters in Hollywood. Finch is the archetypal hero who defends a black American accused of rape in a racially charged country. But more than this, the single father fights to bring up his two children as upright, humane individuals, minus all prejudices. *To Kill A Mockingbird* is great cinema that upholds great principles.

## ▶ TOM JONES

DRAMA | 1963 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
TONY RICHARDSON
**CAST:**
ALBERT FINEY, SUSSANAH YORK
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE AND BEST DIRECTOR.

*Tom Jones* is a robust two-hour adaptation of Henry Fielding's 1759 magnum opus. It details the romantic misadventures of its protagonist Tom Jones (Albert Finey), a playboy with a dubious lineage, who seems to be serious about his relationship with Sophie (Sussanah York), the strong-willed daughter of an aristocrat (Hugh Griffith) who is obsessed with hunting. *Tom Jones* is a colourful critique of the hypocrisy that marked the social mores of 18th century England.

## ▶ TRAFFIC

CRIME | 2000 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
STEVEN SODERBERGH
**CAST:**
MICHAEL DOUGLAS, CATHERINE ZETA-JONES, BENICIO DEL TORO
**AWARDS:**
FOUR OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR.

*Traffic* is art house cinema at its innovative best and handles the war against drugs with a sensibility rare in popular cinema. Steven Soderbergh's canvas is wide. He explores evil in all its ramifications: from the badlands of Mexico to mandarins in Washington DC, the underbelly of WASP-ish America. He also features the diehard DEA vigilantes who, with sheer grit, slug it out single-handedly. *Traffic*'s most poignant scene is the reunion between a father and his heavily doped daughter who is discovered in the city's trash alleys. That the father is the US President's high-profile, anti-drug czar (Michael Douglas) and his daughter, a 16-year-old, who has everything going for her make the situation even more heart-rending. *Traffic*'s high point is its premise that the war against drugs cannot be won by bullets alone. There is little that a traditional, gun-slinging hero can do against an enemy that has invaded government, police department and family. With his hand-held camera and innovative handling – Mexico is in sepia; the US in colour – and with his flesh and blood characters, Soderbergh comes up with a winner. Not forgetting Benicio Del Toro, with his drop-dead looks and unbridled spontaneity.

## ▶ TRAINING DAY

CRIME | 2001 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
ANTOINE FUQUA
**CAST:**
DENZEL WASHINGTON, ETHAN HAWKE
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (DENZEL WASHINGTON).

Denzel Washington is an apt study for creative performance. As the LAPD cop in *Training Day*, Sergeant Alonzo Harris (Denzel Washington) praises those with shades of grey with an eloquence that seems to give them an edge over traditional heroes who stand for heroism and honesty. The drama centres on a day in the life of rookie Jake Hoyt (Ethan Hawke). He has been assigned a daylong practical training shift on the mean streets of LA with the charismatic Sergeant. There are lessons to be learnt and lessons to be unlearnt, realises Hoyt as he accompanies his boss through the rough terrain filled with muggers, rapists, drug dealers and armed robbers. But more than the mean guys, it is the murky morals of the law enforcers that make Hoyt squirm. Denzel and his crack team see nothing wrong in bumping off bad guys and walking away with some loot. For, the highly decorated cop believes that to protect the sheep from the wolves, the cops themselves have to be wolves. Catch the conflicting notions of justice in this riveting film.

## ▶ THE TREASURE OF SIERRA MADRE

ACTION | 1948 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JOHN HUSTON
**CAST:**
HUMPHREY BOGART, WALTER HUSTON, TIM HOLT
**AWARDS:**
THREE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST DIRECTOR.

*The Treasure of Sierra Madre* unfolds as a stirring road adventure that is as rugged as the terrain it explores. The plot revolves around three gold prospectors who set out in search of treasure in the tough Mexican desert. But though the three begin as buddies, they end up as bloodthirsty rivals. The film is a stunning portrayal of moral degradation and human greed. Humphrey Bogart, who excelled as the all-American hero, does a riveting volte-face in his compelling portrayal of Fred Dobbs, a churlish panhandler with questionable morals. He wants to do away with his comrades and run off with the treasure, once the three of them strike gold. Essentially a psychological study of the effect of greed on the human psyche, *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* is gripping.

## ▶ TRUE GRIT

DRAMA | 1969 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
HENRY HATHAWAY
**CAST:**
JOHN WAYNE, GLEN CAMPBELL, KIM DARBY
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (JOHN WAYNE).

In *True Grit*, three people set out into rough Indian terrain to find a ruthless killer. They include the US Marshall Rooster Coburn (John Wayne), a Texas Ranger (Glen Campbell) and Mattie Ross (Kim Darby), a young woman who has hired the hard-skinned, heart-of-gold Marshall to avenge her father's death. John Wayne's trigger-happy ways and his unbridled daring are the heart and soul of this stylish Western.

## ▶ TWO WOMEN

DRAMA | 1966 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
VITTORIO DE SICA
CAST:
SOPHIA LOREN, JEAN PAUL BELMONDO, ELEONORA BROWN
AWARD:
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (SOPHIA LOREN).

*Two Women* is an extremely poignant film about the plight of a mother and daughter who flee Rome to escape Allied bombings during World War II. Cesira (Sophia Loren) hopes to return some day with her daughter, Rosetta (Eleonora Brown), to her village but their journey becomes a harrowing tryst with horrors of war. Even Cesira's romance with kind and gentle Michele (Jean Paul Belmondo) is short-lived because German soldiers kill him. Raped, humiliated and homeless, the two women have only each other to depend on in the tumultuous times. Watch out for Sophia Loren's stunning performance.

## ▶ UNFORGIVEN

ACTION | 1992 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
CLINT EASTWOOD
CAST:
CLINT EASTWOOD, MORGAN FREEMAN, GENE HACKMAN
AWARDS:
FOUR OSCARS.

The quintessential cowboy, who rode off into the sunset and hung up his boots, returns in the *Unforgiven* when everyone thought the western was dead and gone. Clint Eastwood returns to the western genre again in this movie to win critical and commercial acclaim. *Unforgiven* proves to be the lone ranger's second coming. Set in the 1800s, the film sees the resurrection of William Munny (Clint Eastwood), a deadly, violent and bloodthirsty killer, for one last case. Munny has been reformed by his wife and is leading an anonymous life as a farmer with two kids, when he is offered a bounty to nab two outlaws. To accomplish his mission, he teams up with his old partner, Morgan Freeman, and a young upstart. It's a moody, introspective return to the cult of gore, with the notorious sheriff (Gene Hackman) laying the bait.

## ▶ THE USUAL SUSPECTS

CRIME | 1995 | ★★★★

DIRECTION:
BRYAN SINGER
CAST:
STEPHEN BALDWIN, GABRIEL BYRNE, BENICIO DEL TORO, KEVIN SPACEY
AWARDS:
TWO OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (KEVIN SPACEY).

A classic 1990s noir thriller, *The Usual Suspects* picks up the best from the maestros of crime cinema, including Hitchcock and Martin Scorsese. The usual suspects are five men with dubious credentials who have been lined up by cops and the US Customs Department after a truckload of stolen guns has been hijacked. These include ex-cop-turned crook, Gabriel Byrne, psycho Stephen Baldwin, hardware specialist Kevin Pollack, crippled con man Kevin Spacey, and charismatic Benicio Del Toro. The cops are completely clueless and are led on by the bunch of hardened conmen who plan a daring heist, even as they wait to be charged or released. An absolute edge-of-the seat thriller, it has a class act by Kevin Spacey who is the focus of the police interrogation as he creates a chimera, while being questioned by the detective.

## ▶ WALK THE LINE

ROMANCE | 2005 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
JAMES MANGOLD
**CAST:**
JOAQUIN PHOENIX, REESE WITHERSPOON, ROBERT PATRICK
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (REESE WITHERSPOON).

A biopic on the turbulent life of Country Music maestro Johnny Cash (Joaquin Phoenix), *Walk The Line* vibrates with music and life. Not so much because of its storyline but due to its volcanic portrayal of the singer who was chasing demons all his life and his love interest, co-singer June Carter (Reese Witherspoon), who prefers a love expressed more in denial. *Walk The Line* follows the tumultuous life of Cash from his boyhood days in the backwaters of an Arkansas cotton farm – where his brother's accidental death changes his entire psychology – to Sun Studios, the Memphis musical Mecca, that was home to giants like Elvis Presley. Johnny's journey takes him through the archetypal underbelly of the pop world – drugs, alcoholism and infidelity. But what makes it different is his grandiloquent love affair with Alpha girl June Carter that helped him exorcise his demons and pick up the guitar again.

## ▶ WALL STREET

DRAMA | 1986 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
OLIVER STONE
**CAST:**
MICHAEL DOUGLAS, CHARLIE SHEEN, DARYL HANNAH
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTOR (MICHAEL DOUGLAS).

In *Wall Street*, Oliver Stone dissects the age of avarice – and advancement – in the US economy with competence and drive. It is the 1980s, just a few years before the 1987 stock market crash, when Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas), a ruthless and successful stockbroker, declares that greed is good: this being the mantra of neo-capitalist economic growth the world over. Now Gekko, a true representative of the I-Me-Myself generation, is the archetypal corporate honcho who believes unfair practices are fair game in big business. He finds an able learner in ambitious rookie Bud Fox (Charlie Sheen) who joins in the game of corporate wheeling-dealing. But unlike the teacher, the student knows when to draw the line and uses lessons learnt in a thrilling game of vengeance against his business guru. With a career-defining role for Michael Douglas, *Wall Street* is a stirring critique of corporate greed.

## ▶ WEST SIDE STORY

ROMANCE | 1961 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
ROBERT WISE, JEROME ROBBINS
**CAST:**
NATALIE WOOD, RICHARD BEYMER
**AWARDS:**
TEN OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST DIRECTOR.

This film adaptation of the immensely popular Broadway musical, *West Side Story*, has been hailed as one of the best Hollywood musicals, almost measuring up to the grandeur of *Singin'In The Rain*. Thematically, it is a revised version of the Romeo and Juliet story, setting the plot against gang rivalries – Puerto Ricans versus Americans – in the upper West Side of Manhattan. The film's highpoints are the enthralling music by Leonard Bernstein and the mesmerizing choreography by Jerome Robbins. Together, they transform the tragic love story into a colourful spectacle.

## ▶ WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

DRAMA | 1966 | ★★★★

**DIRECTION:**
MIKE NICHOLS
**CAST:**
ELIZABETH TAYLOR, RICHARD BURTON, GEORGE SEGAL, SANDY DENNIS
**AWARDS:**
FIVE OSCARS, INCLUDING BEST ACTRESS (ELIZABETH TAYLOR) AND BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS (SANDY DENNIS).

Only the brave could dare to venture into Edward Albee's territory, but Mike Nichols exhibits great valour – and expertise – in this screen adaptation of Albee's seminal play on dysfunctional marriages and social intercourse. George (Richard Burton), a history professor, and his wife, Martha (Elizabeth Taylor), return home after a party, only to end up hosting another one at home. Martha has invited Nick (George Segal) and Honey (Sandy Dennis), a young couple, over for a party that lasts into the wee hours of the night and gets more and more bizarre with each passing moment. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is a hard-hitting satire on social mores and interpersonal communication where cruelty and aggression simmer under the veneer of civility.

## ▶ WOMEN IN LOVE

DRAMA | 1969 | ★★★½

**DIRECTION:**
KEN RUSSELL
**CAST:**
ALAN BATES, OLIVER REED, GLENDA JACKSON, JENNIE LINDEN
**AWARD:**
OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS (GLENDA JACKSON).

A celluloid adaptation of a novel by D.H. Lawrence, *Women In Love* is a study of the complicated and unpredictable man-woman relationship. Though the film is famous for its nude scenes, essentially it is an intense drama between two friends Gerald (Oliver Reed) and Rupert (Alan Bates) who fall in love and marry two sisters, the feisty, flighty Gudrun (Glenda Jackson) and sober schoolteacher Ursula (Jennie Linden). The honeymoon of the four in the Alps ends in tragedy as Gudrun commits adultery and an enraged Gerald walks off into the blinding snow to meet his death. It's left to a grieving Rupert to ponder on the twisted ramifications of love and longing.

# APPENDICES

# Biggest All-Time Worldwide Hits

**TITANIC (1997)**
$1,835,300,000

**THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING (2003)**
$1,129,219,252

**PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST (2006)**
$1,060,332,628

**HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE (2001)**
$968,657,891

**PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END (2007)**
$958,404,152

**HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX (2007)**
$937,000,866

**STAR WARS: EPISODE I - THE PHANTOM MENACE (1999)**
$922,379,000

**THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS (2002)**
$921,600,000

**JURASSIC PARK (1993)**
$919,700,000

**HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE (2005)**
$892,194,397

**SPIDER-MAN 3 (2007)**
$885,430,303

**SHREK 2 (2004)**
$880,871,036

**HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS (2002)**
$866,300,000

**FINDING NEMO (2003)**
$865,000,000

**THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING (2001)**
$860,700,000

**STAR WARS: EPISODE III - REVENGE OF THE SITH (2005)**
$848,462,555

**INDEPENDENCE DAY (1996)**
$811,200,000

**SPIDER-MAN (2002)**
$806,700,000

**STAR WARS (1977)**
$797,900,000

**SHREK 3 (2007)**
$791,106,665

**HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN (2004)**
$789,458,727

**SPIDER-MAN 2 (2004)**
$783,577,893

**THE LION KING (1994)**
$783,400,000

**THE DA VINCI CODE (2006)**
$757,236,138

**E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (1982)**
$756,700,000

**THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE (2005)**
$738,809,845

**THE MATRIX RELOADED (2003)**
$735,600,000

**TRANSFORMERS (2007)**
$700,759,914

**INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL (2008)**
$682,961,044

**FORREST GUMP (1994)**
$679,400,000

**THE SIXTH SENSE (1999)**
$661,500,000

**PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL (2003)**
$653,200,000

**STAR WARS: EPISODE II - ATTACK OF THE CLONES (2002)**
$648,200,000

**THE INCREDIBLES (2004)**
$624,037,578

**ICE AGE: THE MELTDOWN (2006)**
$623,829,763

**RATATOUILLE (2007)**
$615,935,493

**THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK (1997)**
$614,300,000

**THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST (2004)**
$604,370,943

**WAR OF THE WORLDS (2005)**
$591,377,056

**CASINO ROYALE (2006)**
$587,607,184

**MEN IN BLACK (1997)**
$587,200,000

**I AM LEGEND (2007)**
$583,986,216

**STAR WARS: EPISODE VI - RETURN OF THE JEDI (1983)**
$572,700,000

**NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM (2006)**
$571,063,268

**IRON MAN (2008)**
$555,616,141

**ARMAGEDDON (1998/I)**
$554,600,000

**KING KONG (2005)**
$547,051,260

**MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE II (2000)**
$545,300,000

**HOME ALONE (1990)**
$533,800,000

**STAR WARS: EPISODE V - THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (1980)**
$533,800,000

**MONSTERS, INC. (2001)**
$528,900,000

**THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW (2004)**
$527,939,919

**THE SIMPSONS MOVIE (2007)**
$525,532,370

**GHOST (1990)**
$517,600,000

**TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY (1991)**
$516,800,000

**ALADDIN (1992)**
$501,900,000

**INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE (1989)**
$494,800,000

**TWISTER (1996)**
$494,700,000

**TOY STORY 2 (1999)**
$485,700,000

**TROY (2004)**
$481,228,348

**SAVING PRIVATE RYAN (1998)**
$479,300,000

**CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY (2005)**
$471,856,431

**JAWS (1975)**
$470,600,000

**PRETTY WOMAN (1990)**
$463,400,000

**BRUCE ALMIGHTY (2003)**
$458,900,000

**300 (2006)**
$456,592,590

**THE MATRIX (1999)**
$456,300,000

**GLADIATOR (2000)**
$456,200,000

**X-MEN: THE LAST STAND (2006)**
$455,260,014

**SHREK (2001)**
$455,100,000

**CARS (2006)**
$454,752,771

**NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS (2007)**
$453,961,501

**MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE (1996)**
$452,500,000

**PEARL HARBOR (2001)**
$450,400,000

**OCEAN'S ELEVEN (2001)**
$444,200,000

**THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM (2007)**
$440,725,045

**THE LAST SAMURAI (2003)**
$435,400,000

**TARZAN (1999)**
$435,200,000

**MEET THE FOCKERS (2004)**
$432,667,575

**MR. & MRS. SMITH (2005)**
$427,936,103

**MEN IN BLACK II (2002)**
$425,600,000

**DIE ANOTHER DAY (2002)**
$424,700,000

**DANCES WITH WOLVES (1990)**
$424,200,000

**THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS (2003)**
$424,000,000

**CAST AWAY (2000)**
$424,000,000

**MRS. DOUBTFIRE (1993)**
$423,200,000

**THE MUMMY RETURNS (2001)**
$418,700,000

**TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES (2003)**
$418,200,000

**THE MUMMY (1999)**
$413,300,000

**BATMAN (1989)**
$413,200,000

**RAIN MAN (1988)**
$412,800,000

**THE BODYGUARD (1992)**
$410,900,000

**SIGNS (2002)**
$407,900,000

**MADAGASCAR (2005)**
$406,800,000

**X-2 (2003)**
$406,400,000

**MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III (2006)**
$395,382,309

**GONE WITH THE WIND (1939)**
$390,500,000

**ROBIN HOOD: PRINCE OF THIEVES (1991)**
$390,500,000

**SUPERMAN RETURNS (2006)**
$389,569,408

**RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (1981)**
$383,900,000

# Biggest Box Office Flops

**A SOUND OF THUNDER (2005)**
**Direction:** Peter Hyams
**Budget:** $80 million
**Domestic Gross:** $1.9 million

**ALEXANDER (2004)**
**Direction:** Oliver Stone
**Budget:** $155 million
**Domestic Gross:** $34.3 million

**ALL THE KING'S MEN (1949)**
**Direction:** Robert Rossen
**Budget:** $55 million
**Domestic Gross:** $17.2 million

**BASIC INSTINCT 2 (2006)**
**Direction:** Michael Caton-Jones
**Budget:** $70 million
**Domestic Gross:** $6 million

**BATTLEFIELD EARTH (2000)**
**Direction:** Roger Christian
**Budget:** $73 million
**Domestic Gross:** $21.5 million

**BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES (1990)**
**Direction:** Brian De Palma
**Budget:** $47 million
**Domestic Gross:** $15.7 million

**CATWOMAN (2004)**
**Direction:** Pitof
**Budget:** $100 million
**Domestic Gross:** $40.2 million

**CLEOPATRA (1953)**
**Direction:** Joseph L. Mankiewicz
**Budget:** $44 million
**Domestic Gross:** $26 million

**CUTTHROAT ISLAND (1995)**
**Direction:** Renny Harlin
**Budget:** $98 million
**Domestic Gross:** $10 million

**GIGLI (2003)**
**Direction:** Martin Brest
**Budget:** $54 million
**Domestic Gross:** $6.1 million

**HEAVEN'S GATE (1980)**
**Direction:** Michael Cimino
**Budget:** $44 million
**Domestic Gross:** $3.5 million

**HOWARD THE DUCK (1986)**
**Direction:** Willard Huyck
**Budget:** $37 million
**Domestic Gross:** $16.3 million

**HUDSON HAWK (1991)**
**Direction:** Michael Lehmann
**Budget:** $65 million
**Domestic Gross:** $17.2 million

**INCHON (1981)**
**Direction:** Terence Young
**Budget:** $46 million
**Domestic Gross:** $15.2 million

**ISHTAR (1987)**
**Direction:** Elaine May
**Budget:** $55 million
**Domestic Gross:** $14.5 million

**LEONARD PART 6 (1987)**
**Direction:** Paul Weiland
**Budget:** N/A
**Domestic Gross:** $4.6 million

**ONE FROM THE HEART (1982)**
**Direction:** Francis Ford Coppola
**Budget:** $25 million
**Domestic Gross:** $636,769

**POSEIDON (2006)**
**Direction:** Wolfgang Peterson
**Budget:** $160 million
**Domestic Gross:** $60.7 million

**SAHARA (2005)**
**Direction:** Breck Eisner
**Budget:** $160 million
**Domestic Gross:** $68.7 million

**SHANGHAI SURPRISE (1986)**
**Direction:** Jim Goddard
**Budget:** $17 million
**Domestic Gross:** $2.3 million

**SPEED 2: CRUISE CONTROL (1997)**
**Direction:** Jan De Bont
**Budget:** $160 million
**Domestic Gross:** $48.6 million

**THE ADVENTURES OF PLUTO NASH (2002)**
**Direction:** Ron Underwood
**Budget:** $100 million
**Domestic Gross:** $4.4 million

**THE POSTMAN (1997)**
**Direction:** Kevin Costner
**Budget:** $80 million
**Domestic Gross:** $17.6 million

**TOWN AND COUNTRY (2001)**
**Direction:** Peter Chelsom
**Budget:** $90 million
**Domestic Gross:** $6.7 million

**WATERWORLD (1995)**
**Direction:** Kevin Reynolds
**Budget:** $175 million
**Domestic Gross:** $88.2 million

# Oscar Facts

Films that have won the most Academy Awards, with 11, are: *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Titanic* (1997) and *The Return Of The King* (2003).

Walt Disney has won the most Academy Awards, with 26 (22 competitive, four honorary). He was nominated for 59 awards.

John Ford has won the most directing awards, with four.

Katharine Hepburn has received four Academy Awards (all for Best Actress).

In 2003, *The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King* became the first fantasy film or science fiction film to win the Oscar for Best Picture.

The film that received the most Oscars without winning Best Picture is *Cabaret* with eight awards in 1972. It lost to *The Godfather*.

The two films that share the record for most nominations (11) with no Oscar wins are *The Turning Point* (1977) and *The Color Purple* (1985).

The film with the most nominations without a Best Picture nomination is *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (1969): with nine nominations.

The first (and only) animated film ever to be nominated for Best Picture is *Beauty And The Beast* (1991), which also holds the record for the most nominations for an animated film, with six.

*The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King* (2003), *Braveheart* (1995), *The Last Emperor* (1987), *Gigi* (1958), *Around The World In Eighty Days* (1956), *The Greatest Show On Earth* (1952), *An American In Paris* (1951), *Grand Hotel* (1932), *All Quiet On The Western Front* (1930), *Wings* (1927) are all films that won Best Picture without receiving a single acting nomination.

Bette Davis and Greer Garson are the most consecutively nominated leading actresses (with five nominations from each in a row - Davis 1938 - 1942. Garson 1941 - 1945), while Marlon Brando is the most consecutively nominated leading actor (with four nominations, 1951-1954).

Emma Thompson is the only actress to win an Oscar for Best Actress (*Howards End*, 1992) and an Oscar for Best Screenplay (*Sense And Sensibility*, 1995).

Katharine Hepburn holds the record for the longest time span between first and last Oscar nominations (48 years from 1932/33 to 1981).

Peter O'Toole holds the record for having the most Oscar nominations (eight for Best Actor) without ever winning a competitive acting award. He was given an honorary Oscar in 2003.

Richard Burton (1925-1984) received the highest number of acting nominations (seven) with two distinctions combined: without winning and without ever being given any kind of honorary award.

Kate Winslet holds the record for the youngest person ever to have been nominated five times for an Oscar.

James Dean is the only actor to receive two posthumous acting nominations for the Best Actor Award in 1956 for *East Of Eden* (1955) and again in 1957 for *Giant* (1956).

The shortest performance ever to win an acting Oscar (Best Supporting Actress) is Beatrice Straight's performance, which lasted 5 minutes and 40 seconds, in *Network* (1976).

The shortest performance ever to win a lead acting

Oscar is Anthony Hopkins' performance as Hannibal Lector, with about 16-17 minutes of screen time, in *The Silence Of The Lambs* (1991).

Only two actors have ever declined to accept their Oscars. George C. Scott refused to accept the Best Actor Award for *Patton* (1970); he claimed that acting should not be competitive. Marlon Brando refused to accept the Best Actor Award for *The Godfather* (1972); he sent Sacheen Littlefeather to accept it on his behalf to protest America's treatment of indigenous peoples.

Sophia Loren (*Two Women*) and Roberto Benigni (*Life Is Beautiful*) are the only actors to win Oscars for performing in a language other than English.

Laurence Olivier (*Hamlet*) and Roberto Benigni (*Life Is Beautiful*) are the only people to have directed themselves to an acting Oscar.

George Bernard Shaw is the only person to have been awarded both an Oscar (Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for *Pygmalion* in 1938) and a Nobel Prize (the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925).

Sound re-recording mixer Kevin O'Connell currently holds the record for most Oscar nominations without a win at 19. His most recent nomination was for *Transformers* (2007).

For the Best Director Award, John Ford holds the record for the most awards (four awards, resulting from five nominations), while William Wyler holds the record for the most nominations (12 nominations, resulting in three awards).

The youngest person ever to be awarded an Oscar is Shirley Temple (age 6), who was awarded the inaugural (now retired) non-competitive Academy Juvenile Award in 1934.

The youngest person ever to be nominated for Best Director is John Singleton, who was 24 year old when he was nominated for *Boyz N The Hood* (1991). Additionally, he is currently the only African American to have been nominated for Best Director.

Marlon Brando and Robert De Niro are the only two actors to win Oscars portraying the same character. Brando won Best Actor as Vito Corleone (*The Godfather*) (1972) and De Niro won Best Supporting Actor also as Vito Corleone (*The Godfather Part II*) (1974).

Youngest winner of an acting award: Tatum O'Neal, age 10 (Best Supporting Actress, *Paper Moon*, 1973).

Youngest nominee of an acting award: Justin Henry, age 8 (Best Supporting Actor, *Kramer Vs. Kramer*, 1979).

Oldest winner of an acting award: Jessica Tandy, age 80 (Best Actress, *Driving Miss Daisy*, 1989).

Oldest nominee of an acting award: Gloria Stuart, age 87 (Best Supporting Actress, *Titanic*, 1997).

# Highest Oscar Winners

**Ben-Hur** - 11 (out of 12 nominations)

**Titanic** - 11 (out of 14 nominations)

**Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King** - 11 (out of 11 nominations)

**West Side Story** - 10 (out of 11 nominations)

**Gone With The Wind** - 10 (out of 13 nominations)

**Gigi** - 9 (out of 9 nominations)

**The Last Emperor** - 9 (out of 9 nominations)

**The English Patient** - 9 (out of 12 nominations)

**From Here To Eternity** - 8 (out of 13 nominations)

**On The Waterfront** - 8 (out of 12 nominations)

**My Fair Lady** - 8 (out of 12 nominations)

**Gandhi** - 8 (out of 11 nominations)

**Amadeus** - 8 (out of 11 nominations)

**Cabaret** - 8 (out of 10 nominations).

32 Actor/Actresses have won two Academy Awards, half have been men and half women. Three actors have won three, and one actor has won four. They are as follows:

**4 Oscars - Katharine Hepburn**
1933: *Morning Glory*
1967: *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner*
1968: *The Lion In Winter*
1981: *On Golden Pond*

**3 Oscars - Ingrid Bergman**
1945: *Gaslight*
1957: *Anastasia*
1975: *Murder On The Orient Express*

**3 Oscars - Walter Brennan**
1937: *Come And Get It*
1939: *Kentucky*
1941: *The Westerner*

**3 Oscars - Jack Nicholson**
1976: *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*
1984: *Terms Of Endearment*
1998: *As Good As it Gets*

**2 Oscars - Marlon Brando**
1955: *On The Waterfront*
1973: *The Godfather*

**2 Oscars - Gary Cooper**
1942: *Sergeant York*
1953: *High Noon*

**2 Oscars - Tom Hanks**
1994: *Philadelphia*
1995: *Forrest Gump*

**2 Oscars - Dustin Hoffman**
1980: *Kramer Vs. Kramer*
1989: *Rain Man*

**2 Oscars - Fredric March**
1932: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
1947: *The Best Years Of Our Lives*

**2 Oscars - Spencer Tracy**
1938: *Captains Courageous*
1939: *Boys Town*

**2 Oscars - Robert De Niro**
1975: *The Godfather - Part 11*
1981: *Raging Bull*

**2 Oscars - Gene Hackman**
1972: *The French Connection*
1993: *Unforgiven*

**2 Oscars - Jack Lemmon**
1956: *Mister Roberts*
1974: *Save The Tiger*

**2 Oscars - Kevin Spacey**
1996: *The Usual Suspects*
2000: *American Beauty*

**2 Oscars - Denzel Washington**
1990: *Glory*
2002: *Training Day*

**2 Oscars - Michael Caine**
1987: *Hannah And Her Sisters*
2000: *The Cider House Rules*

**2 Oscars - Melvyn Douglas**
1964: *Hud*
1980: *Being There*

**2 Oscars - Anthony Quinn**
1953: *Viva Zapata*
1957: *Lust For Life*

**2 Oscars - Jason Robards**
1977: *All The President's Men*
1978: *Julia*

**2 Oscars - Peter Ustinov**
1961: *Spartacus*
1965: *Topkapi*

**2 Oscars - Bette Davis**
1936: *Dangerous*
1939: *Jezebel*

**2 Oscars - Olivia de Havilland**
1947: *To Each His Own*
1950: *The Heiress*

**2 Oscars - Sally Field**
1980: *Norma Rae*
1985: *Places In The Heart*

**2 Oscars - Jane Fonda**
1972: *Klute*

1979: *Coming Home*

**2 Oscars - Jodie Foster**
1989: *The Accused*
1992: *The Silence Of The Lambs*

**2 Oscars - Glenda Jackson**
1971: *Women In Love*
1974: *A Touch Of Class*

**2 Oscars - Vivien Leigh**
1940: *Gone With The Wind*
1952: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

**2 Oscars - Luise Rainer**
1937: *The Great Ziegfeld*
1938: *The Good Earth*

**2 Oscars - Hilary Swank**
2000: *Boy's Don't Cry*
2005: *Million Dollar Baby*

**2 Oscars - Elizabeth Taylor**
1961: *Butterfield 8*
1967: *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?*

**2 Oscars - Helen Hayes**
1932: *The Sin Of Madelon Caludet*
1971: *Airport*

**2 Oscars - Jessica Lange**
1983: *Tootsie*
1995: *Blue Sky*

**2 Oscars - Maggie Smith**
1970: *The Prime Of Miss Jean Brodie*
1979: *California Suite*

**2 Oscars - Meryl Streep**
1980: *Kramer Vs. Kramer*
1983: *Sophie's Choice*

**2 Oscars - Dianne Wiest**
1987: *Hannah And Her Sisters*
1995: *Bullets Over Broadway*

**2 Oscars - Shelley Winters**
1960: *The Diary of Anne Frank*
1966: *Patch of Blue*

**2 Oscars - Daniel Day-Lewis**
1990: *My Left Foot*
2008: *There Will Be Blood*

# 100 Memorable Quotes

**All righty then!**
Ace Ventura (Jim Carrey)
*Ace Ventura Pet Detective*, 1994

**Oh, it's nobody's fault, but my own. I was looking up. It was the nearest thing to heaven. You were there.**
Terry McKay (Deborrah Kerr)
*An Affair to Remember*, 1957

**Fasten your seat belts. It's going to be a bumpy ride.**
Margo Channing (Bette Davis)
*All About Eve*, 1950

**It's showtime!**
Joe Gideon (Roy Scheider)
*All That Jazz*, 1979

**Sometimes there's so much beauty in the world, I feel like I can't take it, like my heart's going to cave in.**
Ricky Fitts (Wes Bentley)
*American Beauty*, 1999

**I love the smell of napalm in the morning.**
Lt. Colonel Bill Kilgore (Robert Duvall)
*Apocalypse Now*, 1979

**Houston, we have a problem.**
Jim Lovell (Tom Hanks)
*Apollo 13*, 1995

**You make me want to be a better man.**
Melvin Udall (Jack Nicholson)
*As Good As It Gets*, 1997

**Have you ever danced with the devil in the pale moonlight?**
The Joker (Jack Nicholson)
*Batman*, 1989

**I don't mind if you don't like my manners. I don't like them myself. They're pretty bad. I grieve over them long winter evenings.**
Philip Marlowe (Humphrey Bogart)
*The Big Sleep*, 1946

**You aren't too bright. I like that in a man.**

Matty Walker (Kathleen Turner)
*Body Heat*, 1981

**We rob banks!**
Clyde Barrow (Warren Beatty)
*Bonnie And Clyde*, 1967

**They may take our lives away, but they'll never take our freedom!**
William Wallace (Mel Gibson)
*Braveheart*, 1995

**Kid the next time I say 'Let's go someplace like Bolivia', let's go someplace like Bolivia.**
Butch Cassidy (Paul Newman)
*Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid*, 1969

**Play it again, Sam. Play 'As time goes by.'**
Ilsa Lazlio (Ingrid Bergman)
*Casablanca*, 1942

**Of all the gin joints, in all the towns, in all the world, she walks into mine.**
Ricky Blaine (Humphrey Bogart)
*Casablanca*, 1942

**Ilsa, I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take too much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world.**
Ricky Blaine (Humphrey Bogart)
Casablanca, 1942

**We'll always have Paris.**
Ricky Blaine (Humphrey Bogart)
*Casablanca*, 1942

**Here's looking at you kid!**
Ricky Blaine (Humphrey Bogart)
*Casablanca*, 1942

**Hi Curly, kill anyone tonight?**
Mitch Robbins (Billy Crystal)
**Day ain't over as yet!**
Curly (Jack Parlance)
*City Slickers*, 1991

**I think it pisses God off when you walk by the color purple in the field and don't notice it.**
Shug (Margaret Avery)
*The Color Purple*, 1985

**Carpe Diem! Seize the day, boys. Make your life extraordinary.**
John Keating (Robin Williams)
*Dead Poet's Society*, 1989

**When you decide to be something, you can be it. That's what they don't tell you in the church. When I was your age, they would say we can become cops or criminals. Today, what I'm saying to you is this: when you're facing a loaded gun, what's the difference?**
Frank Costello (Jack Nicholson)
*The Departed*, 2006

**In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.**
Anne Frank (Millie Perkins)
*The Diary Of Anne Frank*, 1959

**Yippie-ki-yay, motherf****r!**
John McCLane (Bruce Willis)
*Die Hard*, 1988

**Nobody puts Baby in a corner!**
Johnny Castle (Patrick Swayze)
*Dirty Dancing*, 1987

**You've got to ask yourself one question: 'Do I feel lucky?' Well, do ya, punk?**
John Callahan (Clint Eastwood)
*Dirty Harry*, 1971

**The name is Bond. James Bond.**
James Bond (Sean Connery)
*Dr. No*, 1962

**Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room!**
President Merkin Muffley (Peter Sellers)
*Dr. Strangelove*, 1964

**Listen to them. Children of the Night. What music they make.**
Count Dracula (Bela Lugosi)
*Dracula*, 1931

**Hoke, you're my best friend.**
Daisy Werthan (Jessica Tandy)
*Driving Miss Daisy*, 1989

**Remember, you're fighting for this woman's honour, which is probably more than she ever did.**
Rufus T Firefly (Groucho Marx)
*Duck Soup*, 1933

**E.T. phone home.**

E.T. (voice of John Welsh)
*E.T. The Extra - Terrestrial*, 1982

**I am not an animal! I am a human being. I am a man.**
John Merrick (John Hurt)
*The Elephant Man*, 1980

**They are called boobs, Ed.**
Erin Brokovich (Julia Roberts)
*Erin Brokovich*, 2000

**What an excellent day for an exorcism!**
Regan/Demon (Linda Blair)
*The Exorcist*, 1973

**My mama always said, 'Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you are gonna get.'**
Forrest Gump (Tom Hanks)
*Forrest Gump*, 1994

**It's alive! It's alive!**
Henry Frankenstein (Colin Clive)
*Frankenstein*, 1931

**If you are a minority of one, the truth is the truth.**
Gandhi (Ben Kingsley)
*Gandhi*, 1982

**Father to a murdered son. Husband to a murdered wife. And I will have my vengeance, in this life or the next.**
Maximus (Russell Crowe)
*Gladiator*, 2000

**I'm going to make him an offer he can't refuse.**
Don Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando)
*The Godfather*, 1972

**Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer.**
Michael Corleone (Al Pacino)
*The Godfather Part II*, 1974

**As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again.**
Scarlett O'Hara (Vivien Leigh)
*Gone With The Wind*, 1939

**After all, tomorrow is another day.**
Scarlett O'Hara (Vivien Leigh)
*Gone With The Wind*, 1939

**Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn.**
Rhett Butler (Clark Gable)
*Gone With The Wind*, 1939

**Mrs. Robinson, you're trying to seduce me. Aren't you?**
Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman)
*The Graduate*, 1967

**Wherever there's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there.**
Tom Joad (Henry Fonda)
*Grapes Of Wrath*, 1940

**You think of yourself as a coloured man. I think of myself as a man.**
John Wade Prentice (Sidney Poitier)
*Guess Who's Coming To Dinner*, 1967

**Men like my father cannot die. They are with me still ... real in memory as they were in flesh, loving and beloved forever. How green was my valley then.**
Huw Morgan (Roddy McDowall)
*How Green Was My Valley*, 1941

**Eddie, you're a born loser.**
Bert Gordon (George C. Scott)
*The Hustler*, 1961

**They call me Mr. Tibbs.**
Virgil Tibbs (Sidney Poitier)
*In The Heat Of The Night*, 1967

**What is it you want, Mary? What do you want? You want the moon? Just say the word, and I'll throw a lasso around it and pull it down.**
George Bailey (James Stewart)
*It's A Wonderful Life*, 1946

**Show me the money!**
Rod Tidwell (Cuba Gooding Jr.)
*Jerry Maguire*, 1996

**You complete me.**
Jerry Maguire (Tom Cruise)
*Jerry Maguire*, 1996

**Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.**
King Mongkut (Yul Brynner)
*The King And I*, 1956

**Sheriff Ali, so long as the Arabs fight tribe**

**against tribe, they will be a little people, a silly people, greedy, barbarous, cruel as you are.**
T.E. Lawrence (Peter O'Toole)
*Lawrence Of Arabia*, 1962

**Love means never having to say you're sorry.**
Oliver Barrett 1V (Ryan O'Neal)
*Love Story*, 1970

**You ask me if I have a God complex. Let me tell you something. I am God.**
Dr. Jed Hill (Alec Baldwin)
*Malice*, 1993

**The stuff that dreams are made of.**
Sam Spade (Humphrey Bogart)
*The Maltese Falcon*, 1941

**Somebody stop me!**
Stanley Ipkiss (Jim Carrey)
*The Mask*, 1994

**You know the difference between you and me? I make this look good.**
Agent J (Will Smith)
*Men In Black*, 1997

**I'm walking here. I'm walking here.**
Ratso Rizzo (Dustin Hoffman)
*Midnight Cowboy*, 1969

**Over? Did you say over? Nothing is over until we decide it is. Was it over when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbour? Hell, no!**
John Bluto Blutarsky (James Belushi)
*National Lampoon's Animal House*, 1978

**Fat, drunk, and stupid is no way to go through life, son.**
Dean Wormer (John Vernon)
*National Lampoon's Animal House*, 1978

**Listen to me, mister. You're my knight in shining armour. Don't you forget it. You're going to get back on that horse, and I'm going to be right behind you, holding on tight, and away we're gonna go, go, go!**
Ethel Thayer (Katharine Hepburn)
*On Golden Pond*, 1981

**You don't understand! I could've had class. I could've been a contender. I could've been somebody, instead of a bum, which is what I am.**
Terry Malloy (Marlon Brando)
*On The Waterfront*, 1954

**Now, I want you to remember that no poor bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb bastard die for his country.**
General George Patton (George C. Scott)
*Patton*, 1970

**Get your stinking paws off me, you damned dirty ape!**
George Taylor (Charlton Heston)
*Planet Of The Apes*, 1968

**With my brains and your looks, we could go places.**
Frank Chambers (John Garfield)
*The Postman Always Rings Twice*, 1946

**I want the fairy tale.**
Vivian (Julia Roberts)
*Pretty Woman*, 1990

**A boy's best friend is his mother.**
Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins)
*Psycho*, 1960

**We all go a little mad sometimes.**
Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins)
*Psycho*, 1960

**Earn this.**
Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks)
*Saving Private Ryan*, 1998

**Hoo-ah!**
Lt. Colonel Frank Slade (Al Pacino)
*Scent Of A Woman*, 1992

**Get busy livin', or get busy dyin'.**
Andy (Tim Robbins)
*The Shawshank Redemption*, 1994

**Here's Johnny!**
Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson)
*The Shining*, 1980

**A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice chianti.**
Dr. Hannibal Lector (Anthony Hopkins)
*The Silence Of The Lambs*, 1991

**I do wish we could chat longer, but I'm having an old friend for dinner.**

Dr. Hannibal Lector (Anthony Hopkins)
*The Silence Of The Lambs*, 1991

**I see dead people.**
Cole Sear (Haley Joel Osment)
*The Sixth Sense*, 1999

**Whatever life holds in store for me, I will never forget these words: 'With great power comes great responsibility.' This is my gift, my curse. Who am I? I'm Spider-Man.**
Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire)
*Spider-Man*, 2002

**May the Force be with you.**
Hans Solo (Harrison Ford)
*Star Wars*, 1977

**Do or not do. There is no try.**
Yoda (Frank Oz)
*Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*, 1980

**I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.**
Blanche Dubois (Vivien Leigh)
*A Streetcar Named Desire*, 1951

**I am big! It's the pictures that got small.**
Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson)
*Sunset Boulevard*, 1950

**I'm here to fight for truth, justice and the American way!**
Superman (Christopher Reeves)
*Superman*, 1978

**You talkin' to me?**
Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro)
*Taxi Driver*, 1976

**I'll be back.**
Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenneger)
*The Terminator*, 1984

**Hasta la vista, baby!**
Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenneger)
*Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, 1991

**I'm King of the World!**
Jack Dawson (Leonardo DiCaprio)
*Titanic*, 1997

**You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.**
Atticus Finch (Gregory Peck)
*To Kill A Mockingbird*, 1962

**It's hell of a thing killin' a man. You take away all he's got and all he's ever gonna have.**
William Bill Munny (Clint Eastwood)
*Unforgiven*, 1992

**The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist.**
Verbal Klint (Kevin Spacey)
*The Usual Suspects*, 1995

**Greed, for the lack of a better word, is good.**
Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas)
*Wall Street*, 1987

**I'll have what she's having.**
Customer (Estelle Reiner)
*When Harry Met Sally*, 1989

**If they move, kill 'em.**
Pike Bishop (William Holden)
*The Wild Bunch*, 1969

**Toto, I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.**
Dorothy Gale (Judy Garland)
*The Wizard Of Oz*, 1939

**I'll get you, my pretty, and your dog, too!**
The Wicked Witch of the West (Margaret Hamilton)
*The Wizard Of Oz*, 1939

**I've a head for business and a bod for sin.**
Tess McGill (Melanie Griffith)
*Working Girl*, 1988

**No matter what I do or ever say, Heathcliff, this is me - now - standing on this hill with you. This is me, forever.**
Cathy (Merle Oberon)
*Wuthering Heights*, 1939

**My mother thanks you. My father thanks you. My sister thanks you. And I thank you.**
George M.Cohan (James Cagney)
*Yankee Doodle Dandy*, 1942

# Beyond Hollywood: 50 Best Foreign Films

**A Man And A Woman (France)**
Direction: Claude Lelouch
Year: 1966

**A Short Film About Love (Poland)**
Direction: Krzystof Kieslowski
Year: 1988

**Aguirre Wrath Of God (Germany)**
Direction: Werner Herzog
Year: 1972

**All About My Mother (Spain)**
Direction: Pedro Almodovar
Year: 1999

**Amarcod (Italy)**
Direction: Frederico Fellini
Year: 1963

**Amelie (France)**
Direction: Jean-Pierre Jeunet
Year: 2001

**Au Revoir Les Enfant (France)**
Direction: Louis Malle
Year: 1987

**Babette's Feast (Denmark)**
Direction: Gabriel Axel
Year: 1987

**The Barbarian Invasion (Canada)**
Direction: Denys Arcand
Year: 2003

**The Battle Of Algiers (Italy)**
Direction: Gillo Pontecorvo
Year: 1966

**Battleship Potemkin (Russia)**
Direction: Sergei M. Eisenstein
Year: 1925

**Bicycle Thieves (Italy)**
Direction: Vittorio De Sica
Year: 1948

**Blowup (Italy)**
Direction: Micheangelo Antonioni
Year: 1966

**Breaking The Waves (Denmark)**
Direction: Lars Von Trier
Year: 1996

**Breathless (France)**
Direction: Jean-Luc Godard
Year: 1960

**Carmen (Spain)**
Direction: Carlos Saura
Year: 1983

**Children Of Heaven (Iran)**
Direction: Majid Majidi
Year: 1997

**Confidence (Hungary)**
Direction: Istvan Szabo
Year: 1980

**Dancer In The Dark (Denmark)**
Direction: Lars von Trier
Year: 2000

**Eight And A Half (Italy)**
Direction: Federico Fellini
Year: 1963

**Fanny And Alexander (Sweden)**
Direction: Ingmar Bergman
Year: 1982

**Farewell My Concubine (Hong Kong)**
Direction: Kaige Chen
Year: 1993

**Hero (China)**
Direction: Zhang Yimou
Year: 2002

**In The Mood For Love (Hong Kong)**
Direction: Kar Wai Wong
Year: 2000

**Jules And Jim (France)**
Direction: Francois Truffaut
Year: 1962

**Kagemusha (Japan)**
Direction: Akira Kurosawa
Year: 1980

**Kandahar (Iran)**
Direction: Mohsen Makhmalbaf
Year: 2001

**La Dolce Vita (Italy)**
Direction: Federico Fellini
Year: 1960

**La Strada (Italy)**
Direction: Federico Fellini
Year: 1950

**L'Avventura (Italy)**
Direction: Michelangelo Antonioni
Year: 1960

**Man Without A Past (Finland)**
Direction: Aki Kaurismaki
Year: 2002

**The Marriage Of Maria Braun (Germany)**
Direction: Rainer Werner Fassbinder
Year: 1979

**Mephisto (Hungary)**
Direction: Istvan Szabo
Year: 1981

**No Man's Land (Bosnia)**
Direction: Danis Tanovic
Year: 2001

**Pele The Conqueror (Denmark)**
Direction: Billie August
Year: 1987

**Persona (Sweden)**
Direction: Ingmar Bergman
Year: 1966

**Raise The Red Lantern (China)**
Direction: Zhang Yimou
Year: 1991

**Rashomon (Japan)**
Direction: Akira Kurosawa
Year: 1950

**Rules Of The Game (France)**
Direction: Jean Renoir
Year: 1939

**The Seven Samurai (Japan)**
Direction: Akira Kurosawa
Year: 1954

**Solyaris (Russia)**
Direction: Andrei Tarkovsky
Year: 1972

**Three Colors: Blue, Red, White (Poland)**
Direction: Krzysztof Kieslowski
Year: 1993, 1994

**Tokyo Story (Japan)**
Direction: Yasujiro Ozu
Year: 1953

**Tsotsi (South Africa)**
Direction: Gavin Hood
Year: 2005

**Volver (Spain)**
Direction: Pedro Almodovar
Year: 2006

**Where Is My Friend's House (Iran)**
Direction: Abbas Kiarostami
Year: 1987

**Wild Strawberries (Sweden)**
Direction: Ingmar Bergman
Year: 1957

**Wings Of Desire (Germany)**
Direction: Wim Wenders
Year: 1987

**Y Tu Mama Tambien (Mexico)**
Direction: Alfonso Cuaron
Year: 2001

**Z (Algeria)**
Direction: Costa Gavras
Year: 1969

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